Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research

Edited by Jean McNiff
## Contents

Contributors iv  
Acknowledgements vii  

Editorial: Shining where the light and life are 1  
*Jean McNiff*  

Introduction: The spiritual dimension of action research 6  
*John Elliott*  

Community action research: Providing evidence of value and virtue 17  
*Josephine Bleach*  

To act or not to act? That is the question! 33  
*Pip Bruce Ferguson*  

Action research in Iceland: glimpses and reflections 43  
*Hafþór Guðjónsson*  

Developing virtuous leaders: an action research approach to improving school leadership in a South African context 54  
*Lesley Wood*  

Bridging the gap between health care education and clinical practice through action research 69  
*Bente Norbye, Odd Edvardsen and Anne-Lise Thoresen*  

What makes teachers good at what they do? The axiological model 79  
*Karen McArdle, Alison Hurrell and Yolanda Muñoz Martinez*  

The value of researching civic responsibility in the context of Latvia 93  
*Lāsma Latsons and Linda Pavitola*  

Re-articulating the values and virtues of Moravian action research 107  
*Joseph M. Shosh*  

Endword: Virtuous education: divided no more 124  
*Julian Stern*  

Index 129
Contributors

**Josephine Bleach** is Director of the Early Learning Initiative at the National College of Ireland. Over the course of her career, she has worked with a wide range of schools and educational stakeholders, community groups, voluntary and statutory agencies along with different initiatives. She has facilitated, motivated and mentored others in designing systems and structures that meet the needs of both individuals and the organisations as a whole.

**Bruce Damons** is a principal at a primary school in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He is currently registered for his PhD, focusing on the role of the community school in transforming education. He is recognised for his expertise in school leadership within disadvantaged contexts on an international level. He won the national Principal of the Year award in 2008 (Primary school) and is regularly invited to talk on this subject.

**Odd Edvardsen** is an assistant professor in nursing education at the Faculty of Health Sciences in the University of Tromsø. He has also been involved in developing trauma care programs in mine-infested and war-ridden countries in the South for many years.

**John Elliott** is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of East Anglia, UK and a founding member and former director of the internationally acclaimed Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at UEA. He also served as Dean of Education from 1992–95. He is well known internationally for his role in developing the theory and practice of action research within the broad field of education and training, as a means of bringing about sustainable innovation and change through engaging teachers and trainers as active participants in creating knowledge about how to effect change.

**Pip Bruce Ferguson** works as a Teaching Developer at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand, and also as an independent research contractor. She is a compulsive collaborator who loves helping teachers to research their practice. She and her husband have three daughters, four grandchildren and both love music and reading.

**Hafþór Guðjónsson** is a docent at the School of Education, University of Iceland. His interests include science education and action research.
Alison Hurrell is a retired senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. As a teacher/educator of forty years, she has always been interested in professional identity and educational vision, the savoir-être of beginning teachers. Values and virtues are central to her practice. The current focus is on what it is that makes people good at what they do in their professional practice.

Lasma Latsone is an assistant professor in Liepaja University, Latvia, Faculty of Education and Social Work, and a visiting research fellow of York St. John University, Faculty of Theology and Education. Her research interests are connected with religious and intercultural education.

Karen McArdle is Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange in the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. She has a particular interest in narrative inquiry. Values and virtues are central to her research passion, which is about the professional development of educators. The current focus is on what it is that makes people good at what they do in their professional practice.

Jean McNiff is Professor of Educational Research at York St John University. She also holds visiting professorial positions at Beijing Normal University and Ningxia Teachers University, People’s Republic of China; the University of Tromsø, Norway; and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa. She has written widely on action research in education and professional education across the disciplines.

Yolanda Muñoz Martinez was a teacher and headteacher in Primary Education for eight years. She is currently a Lecturer in Education, at the University of Alcalá, Spain, in the Educational Sciences Department. Her research interests are inclusion in education and teacher education.

Bente Norbye is an associate professor and research group leader of Health Care Education at the University of Tromsø. Since 1990 she has developed and been responsible for a decentralised nursing programme that contributes to the recruitment and retention of nurses for rural areas in North Norway.

Linda Pavitola is an associate professor in Liepaja University, Latvia, where she is also a Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work. Her research interests are connected with cultural aspects in education and the possibilities for creative self-expression.
Joseph M. Shosh chairs the Education Department at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), where he teaches courses in literacy education and teacher action research. He serves as a founding member of the Coordinating Group for the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA).

Julian Stern is Professor of Education and Religion, and Dean of Education & Theology, at York St John University. He was a school teacher for fourteen years, and worked in universities for sixteen years prior to coming to York St John University in 2008. Julian is widely published, with eleven books and over thirty articles, including The Spirit of the School (2009), Schools and Religions: Imagining the Real (2007), and Teaching Religious Education: Researchers in the Classroom (2006).

Anne-Lise Thoresen is an assistant professor in the Midwifery Education postgraduate programme in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Tromsø and she is a member of the Health Care Education research group in the faculty. She is involved in organising cooperation and exchange in international midwifery education networks, and in developing and strengthening supervision in midwifery education.

Lesley Wood is a Research Professor at North-West University, South Africa. She researches and publishes mainly in the fields of HIV and AIDS and general wellness in education contexts. She prefers action research as a methodology because of its transformative and emancipatory potential.
Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to many people in this venture.

In the Editorial I make the point that the conference was, from start to finish, a celebration of people’s good work, some of which has been achieved in the face of considerable odds.

The celebratory spirit has continued in the preparation and production of the book. People who have joined in and deserve special mention are:

- Jeremy Toynbee, of Toynbee Editorial Services, Essex, who typeset the manuscript, turning it from a raw manuscript into a polished text.

- Timothy Ingle of the University of Waikato, who designed and produced the cover. When I thanked him for his patience in producing multiple drafts, he wrote back, ‘No worries. This is a fun project, easy to have enthusiasm for it’.

Special thanks are due to Professor Julian Stern, Dean of Education & Theology at York St John University, for his unwavering commitment to the idea of creating a ‘value and virtue in practice-based research’ conference and book.

And thanks to all the contributors, who have worked with commitment and tenacity, to meet deadlines and word counts, all in good spirit and with a great sense of purposefulness. It has been a collaborative and enjoyable experience throughout.

Thank you, too, to our readers. We hope you enjoy the book as much as we have enjoyed writing it.

For further information about the Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research International Conference and Network, please contact Jean McNiff at jeannmcniff@mac.com.
The Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research conference (and now project) came into being in 2011 from a desire to celebrate. The celebration would take the form of the meeting of many people who share the same values and social commitments to transform their piece of the world into a more peaceful and productive place by first transforming themselves, beginning with their own thinking. I know these people. I am fortunate to be able to travel a great deal, which brings me into contact with many people around the world, including those I am speaking of here. They are great people doing great work and amazing educational research in a range of contexts. We have wonderful conversations and discuss how we wish to create a better world for ourselves and others through our work and research, and we have a lot of fun while doing so.

The problem is that while I am fortunate to meet and get to know these colleagues they don’t get to know one another, so are missing out on the same opportunities from which we benefit in our local contexts. It was this desire to share the learning, and the fun, that led me to chat with Julian Stern, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Theology at York St John University, to see if we could convene a seminar where the people I know could come together, get to know one another, and share their learning, and also attract the interest of other people who may also wish to learn with us. Julian, as always, responded immediately and positively to what he saw as a valuable idea with enormous potential for realising a range of potentials, and so the conference came into being.

The first conference in 2011 was indeed a celebration – a big party in fact, as people met those they had heard about and whose work they had read, now face-to-face. Passers-by wondered what was going on and were invited to join us, including students at the university. Friendships were made, educational alliances forged and new networks developed. We had a ball, so much so that, at the end of the conference, people said, ‘Let’s do it again next year.’ The idea was established, and it began to grow. In 2012 we held the second, even more successful and productive conference, and now, in 2013,
we are holding our third. We have developed a tradition whereby we celebrate the values that inform our practices, articulate them (this was the theme of the 2012 conference) and (as in the 2013 event) show how we are influencing a range of contexts, including policy contexts, through our work. By making our values explicit in this way, and explaining how we are attempting to live them, we hope we are justified in claiming our educational research practices as virtuous practices.

Perhaps a sub-text is emerging through what I am saying. This sub-text is saying that the business of developing this initiative has itself been, and continues to be a research programme; perhaps the articulation of this emerging programme should become the main text. All research programmes are guided by specific methodological steps: identify an issue, explain why it is an issue, gather data, consider actions taken, generate evidence, test the validity of the emerging knowledge claims, explain the significance of the research, modify practice and thinking in light of the evaluation. From an action research perspective, the ‘end’ of the enquiry turns into the beginning of a new one; the process is ongoing, a continual process of asking questions and seeing possibilities in everything, which is the very nature of a life of enquiry. Those programmes are also guided by a vision of how things may be different, or perhaps better; in this case, the vision was how to create opportunities for people with their own visions and who are bringing light and hope into their problematic contexts to tell their stories and connect with like-minded others.

The act of planning and bringing the conference to life therefore may be seen as a research programme, and this book becomes part of a robust evidence base that shows its value for and through the lives and practices of others. Further, if we adopt the widely held view that values are the beliefs and principles we live by, and explain how the living of those values turns us into virtuous practitioners, then we can also say that we are engaging in virtuous practices through telling our research-based stories as aspects of our educational practices. This perspective is congruent with that of Lawrence Stenhouse who said in 1983 that ‘research is systematic enquiry made public’, and with the view of Hefce (2009, cited also in Julian Stern’s piece as the end-word to this book), that research is a ‘process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared’ (Hefce 2009: 52). As an action researcher, I would add (as in 2013) ‘with personal and social intent’, because it is my firm belief that research does not exist of and for itself, but should bring useful knowledge into the world of everyday personal and social practices, and should help us all find ways of living more peaceful and productive lives together.

This book is therefore a kind of progress report where people explain how they have pursued their action enquiries in their efforts to live more peaceful and productive lives together, and to show how they are influencing other
people’s thinking and practices through doing so. Here is a brief outline of the chapters.

John Elliott sets the scene in the Introduction by explaining his understanding of educational action research as an activity of the spirit. This means for him that teaching should be seen as a distinct social practice that may be understood as a form of cooperative inquiry where values are negotiated inter-subjectively in and through action, and continually refined through mutual reflection on action. Achieving such understanding is, however, hard work for it means avoiding self-deception and facing up to one’s own preconceptions in the broader effort of seeing the other person’s point of view and pursuing knowledge of the good.

This ‘other-focused’ perspective becomes a theme that permeates all the accounts in the book. Josephine Bleach begins by describing and explaining how she is coordinating collaborative community-based work through the National College of Ireland’s Early Learning Initiative in the Dublin Docklands. This work serves the interests of the community and involves all members of the community. A key dilemma, however, is how to produce an evidence base to show the value of the initiative while using an action research methodology. Josephine presents a powerful argument for how this may be achieved.

On to New Zealand, where Pip Bruce Ferguson deals with similar issues, focusing now on the dilemmas of judging the practices of one community, which are grounded in identified values, in light of the values of another. She tells a story of some of the difficulties involved when Māori practitioners were required to make their research achievements public as part of a national research exercise. This appeared to them as vaunting their achievements, which was contrary to their culture of modesty. Yet participation was the means to provide the necessary evidence base that could secure financial stability. Perpetual questions arise: Whose values? Whose decisions? Whose purposes? How may these be negotiated and justified?

Hafþór Guðjónsson gives an account of the development of action research in Iceland. As a key figure in educational circles, he outlines some of the dilemmas of establishing action research in institutional contexts, and explains how this has been achieved through the validation and legitimation of high quality dissertations and theses by universities for work undertaken in schools and colleges. He refers as an example to the first action research doctoral thesis in Iceland (an experience I well remember since I was one of the external examiners), and the significance of the event.

Establishing the legitimacy of practitioners’ work and knowledge is also a theme developed by Lesley Wood, in South Africa. Through working with Bruce Damons, a school principal, she shows the power of action research approaches for engaging with political issues and achieving at least an element
of justice for possibly the most disadvantaged members of a society. Lesley tirelessly promotes the idea of action research as a methodology of social transformation, and her paper is an example of how this works.

From the Southern hemisphere to the most Northern university in the world, to Tromsø in Norway, where Bente Norbye, Anne-Lise Thoresen and Odd Edvardsen give an account of their work with nurse and healthcare practitioners within a broader context of structural and epistemological change. They offer an account of how they are reconceptualising themselves as practitioner researchers rather than only as professional educators, and how they are bringing new ideas about practice-based forms of enquiry into a somewhat traditionalist academic context. The value here is to create spaces for the voices of practitioners (nurses, healthcare workers, and their teachers) to be heard along with established voices in the literatures.

Now to Scotland and Spain, where Karen McArdle and colleagues explain how they are developing an axiological approach to their practices, that is, bringing philosophical understandings to the study of value. They report on a qualitative study, where student teachers were encouraged to articulate and reflect on their values as the basis for understanding their practices. Karen and colleagues suggest that teacher education (and probably all professional education) should be grounded in a coherence of practice, pedagogy and philosophy.

Lāsma Latsone and Linda Pavitola develop similar ideas in their study in Latvia of how to encourage a view of citizenship and civic responsibility as grounded in civically oriented values, while recognising the power that historical and cultural influences exercise on contemporary thinking and contexts. They argue passionately for forms of teacher professional education to include an emphasis on the concept of community and civic responsibility, and so produce ‘thoughtful, politically educated and active citizens who would seek solutions to conflicts in democratic and intelligent ways, not through violence’.

This need is reiterated by Joseph Shosh, in the USA, who goes on to explain how teacher education programmes at Moravian College are grounded in the idea of practitioners taking responsibility for their own learning, and committing to collaborative practices and cooperative learning for personal and social wellbeing. These practices then inform a broader sense of what it means to live in a decent society and to contribute to new understandings of what such a society may look like and how it may be achieved.

Julian Stern brings it all home to York St John University, by commenting on how engaging in practice-based, action-oriented research can mean that we live ‘divided no more’. We learn to live integrated spiritual, mental and social lives through studying our practices in company with others who are doing the
same, and commit to the idea and practice of research as the basis of learning, embedded in practice.

So the celebration continues, now in print. The stories told here are hopeful, alive and defiant. They are defiant in the sense that they offer a different perspective to the dominant discourses of constraint, prohibition and doom and gloom that feature strongly in the literatures of education, professional education and research. They defy the idea that we live only in ‘dark times’ (Arendt 1967) and dark contexts. Arendt speaks about some outstanding figures who brought light into the darkness of the contexts of the early twentieth century. The stories in this book are also from outstanding figures who also bring light with them, now in the early years of the twenty-first century. While ‘dark times’ may be the intellectual, social and professional reality for many people in the world, the stories in the book explain how their authors and colleagues are exercising their intellectual and political influence to turn the dark into light. They adopt a methodological stance that says, ‘While we recognize the ugly realities of these dark times and contexts, we refuse to engage with anything other than life-affirming discourses. We bring the light with us. We imagine other realities, other possible futures. We go forward to embrace life.’ They show what may be possible, in spite of the obstacles, when people of goodwill come together to exercise their power to transform their social formations through transforming their own understandings of what they are doing.

So here is our progress report. We hope our readers enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed writing and producing it. We hope you will share in the celebrations in years to come.

And here’s to the next year of value and virtue in practice-based research. May we all live well to make our contributions to others’ and our own sense of wellness as we continue to shine where the light and life are.

References

Introduction

The spiritual dimension of teaching: a view of educational action research

John Elliott

Introduction

In this paper I want to argue that educational action research is in some sense an activity of the spirit and I shall define such an activity in terms of what Pádraig Hogan (2010: 63) has called ‘the heartwork of teaching’. Moreover, I shall argue that the outcomes of such heartwork in professional communities of practice can be drawn together formulaically in the form of a choreography of teaching that is dynamic and open to continuous revision.

The spiritual and the ethical

In claiming that educational action research is an activity of the spirit, best depicted as the heartwork of teaching, I want to clarify how it differs from other depictions of spiritual activity. First, it does not imply any commitment to a particular religious tradition. From the standpoint of a particular tradition educational action research may make a lot of sense but no more sense than it may have for someone who has no religious allegiance. The fact that the work of the spirit is often expressed and articulated through a religious tradition does not make it necessarily so. This does not imply that with the decline of religion it is necessarily breaking free of limiting conditions. Spirituality is always shaped by the cultural resources available at the time.

Joseph Dunne (2003: 102–106) has pointed out how we are confronted with a plurality of spiritualities within a contemporary cultural milieu that is shaped by an ethics of ‘emotivism.’ Within such a milieu Dunne argues that Alasdair MacIntyre’s three cultural embodiments of ‘emotivism’ – the ‘aesthete’, the ‘therapist’ and the ‘manager’ – (although undermining the enabling conditions for the acquisition and exercise of virtue) have provided hospitable ground for many ersatz versions of spirituality. For the ‘aesthete’ the self is the sum total of his/her attitudes and preferences, the social world is an arena for the fulfilment of desire, the last enemy is boredom and despair. The latter is where the ‘aesthete’ may resort to a therapist in a quest for experiences
that ‘enhance, intensify or express the self’. Here it is the role of the therapist to open up a higher dimension of selfhood through the consumption of spiritual experiences. Therapy and spirituality become indistinguishable, Dunne argues, when the former is no longer understood ‘as a healing art predicated on a psychological ailment or pathology’. In servicing the aesthetic sensibility therapy aims to optimise the psychological functioning of individuals ‘bringing power to one’s external transactions and tranquillity and ease to one’s inner experiences’. Viewed in these terms the spiritual displaces truth as a value and replaces it with ‘psychological effectiveness’. The spiritual therefore need not run into conflict with ‘the managers’ of society inasmuch as ‘effectiveness’, based on ‘scientific knowledge’ about human functioning, is their governing norm. There are no ethical truths for ordering social relations.

Dunne in many respects echoes Charles Taylor, who refers in *Sources of the Self* (1989: 507) to ‘the triumph of the therapeutic’, a cultural turn in which methods of therapy and the sciences that underpin them – psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology – become important, and moral rules get subordinated to the requirements of personal fulfilment. Indeed Taylor argues that ‘the very language of morals and politics tends to sink to the relatively colourless and subjectivist talk of “values”’. In our increasingly expressionist culture nothing but subjectively defined anthropocentric goods can be allowed to ‘trump self-realization’. Hence, within the terms of this culture, Taylor contends, in relation to the things we relate to in life – job, family, social position and roles – we are encouraged to ask questions like:

‘In what ways are our values, goals and aspirations being invigorated or violated by our present life-system? How many parts of our personality can we live out, and what parts are we suppressing? How do we feel about our way of living in the world at any given time?’

According to Taylor the values human beings attribute to objects and things in their social world increasingly become seen in instrumental terms as a means of self-fulfilment. Human relations and ethical bonds in a society of self-fulfillers are treated as revocable. Taylor contrasts this cultural turn with a traditional understanding of self-realization as presupposing that there are non-anthropocentric values and goods, where ‘some things are important beyond the self’ and can ‘provide the significance a fulfilling life needs’.

For Taylor the contemporary cultural landscape subordinates the ethical to the spiritual, viewed in subjectivist and expressionist terms as the quest for self-fulfilment, self-realization, self-expression and personal authenticity (see Taylor 1989: 507). Inasmuch as this view of spirituality shapes teaching then educational values will be understood in anthropocentric terms as the subjective preferences of individual teachers rather than in non-anthropocentric terms as things that are important beyond the self. Educational action research in this
context becomes a kind of professional self-therapy, the search for experiences in the teacher’s transactions with their students that enhance their feelings of psychological effectiveness and thereby intensify their sense of self. Such experiences will constitute, from an expressionist and subjectivist standpoint, the realisation of the teacher’s values.

This account of action research as the spiritual dimension of teaching reminds me of Dunne’s account of aesthetic spirituality (2003: 104) as ‘a kind of psychological virtuosity enabling one to negotiate a whole gamut of experiences, adroitly avoiding or transmuting negative ones, while maintaining a harmonious and mobile sense of self’. All of this of course is perfectly compatible with the idea of the teacher as a manager who evaluates his/her teaching in terms of its effectiveness at producing desired learning outcomes. Teachers’ action research becomes the construction of first-order narratives of the self, in search of a coherent and meaningful identity and sense of self-efficacy. This reflects what Heikkinen, Huttenen, Syrjälä and Personen (2012) depict as ‘the narrative turn’, a new wave of post-modernist qualitative inquiry.

There is a different account of educational action research as a spiritual activity which stems, not from the standpoint of subjectivist expressionism that locates the self as the source of educational value, but from a standpoint where the source of educational value lies in a distinctive social practice. MacIntyre provides the classic account of a social practice in *Beyond Virtue* (1984: 187) as:

… any coherent and complex form of socially established complex co-operative human activity through which goods that are internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.

From a standpoint that views teaching as a distinctive educational social practice action research may be viewed as a form of co-operative inquiry, in which the power of teachers to achieve excellence, and their conceptions of the educational goods and ends involved, are systematically extended. In the context of social practices ‘values’, depicted as goods that are internal to them, are neither subjectivist expressions of individual preferences nor fixed and static ends that exist independently of the practices in themselves. They are defined inter-subjectively in and through action and can be continually redefined through mutual reflection on action. Heikinnen *et al.* (2012: 17), in revisiting their earlier attempt to formulate validation principles for narrative inquiry in the context of action research, find themselves having to acknowledge the importance of an ethical dimension that transcends subjectivist and objectivist accounts of value. With respect to their narrative research in northern Finnish villages they discovered the significance of ethical reflection as a founding
principle ‘of both conducting and evaluating our research’ in circumstances ‘where people of diverse backgrounds and contexts encounter each other in a particular place that has its own history’. Such circumstances call for continuous ethical reflexivity as a research stance.

MacIntyre does not refer to social practices as having a spiritual dimension. For him they open up ethical spaces for the practice of virtue, forms of action that constitute standards of excellence within a given practice because they are consistent with the realization of the goods that are internal to the practice. However, these forms of action need to be discerned rather than taken for granted in the changing circumstances of social practices today. They constitute knowledge of the goods that are internal to a practice. The effort to acquire such knowledge is hard work and the temptation to self-deception strong. It involves a willingness on the part of practitioners to deepen their own self-understanding by facing up to their own pre-dispositions and prejudices in the context of their practice. This presupposes that they love their work in the sense of being deeply committed to the values that define it. I would argue that it is the practitioner’s quest with their peers for knowledge of the good that characterises and pinpoints the spiritual dimension of a social practice. It involves imaginative action experiments and a deepening self-understanding. Such a process may be depicted as action research, but it takes a different form to action research depicted from a standpoint of subjectivist expressionism. Accounts of it will consist of stories about the quest for knowledge of the good. Such stories will include narratives about how prejudices were overcome and new self-understandings developed in the action research process. However, they will take the form of second-order narratives of the self that are disciplined by the first-order quest for knowledge of the good.

The author invites the reader to examine articles in a special issue on ‘Narrative Inquiry and Action Research’ in Educational Action Research, Vol 20, No 1 in the light of the distinction between first-order and second-order narratives of the self. I found articles by Heikkinen et al. (2012): 5–21, Kearns (2012): 23–40, McNiff (2012): 129–146, and Attard (2012): 161–175 particularly interesting, because although some appeared to depict second-order rather than first-order narratives they did not make the ethical dimension of educational practice explicit. Some of the accounts referred to procedural values, such as equity and justice, as ends of educational action research/narrative inquiry rather than specifically educational ends that are internal to educational practice.

Dunne (2003: 100) argues that ‘spiritual’ does not mark out a special domain of experience, but rather signifies ‘the overall burden and direction’ of a life or way of life. One does not dignify a life, or way of life, by calling it ‘spiritual’ as opposed to ‘non-spiritual’. However, he does argue that notions like truth and goodness ‘have a peculiarly intimate and reflexive relation to spirit’ so that we
may judge a spirituality as true or good ‘precisely when it satisfies and furthers our pursuit of truth and goodness’ and ‘as false or bad when it frustrates, or deflects us from, that pursuit’. With respect to teaching the key question for me is not whether action research takes a spiritual or non-spiritual form but whether it furthers or frustrates the pursuit of truth and goodness in teaching. I believe that action research in teaching that adopts a subjectivist expressionist stance offers a distorted view of the activity.

I want to argue for an ethically grounded and non-subjectivist account of action research as the spiritual dimension in teaching, without reducing ‘the spiritual’ to the ethical. Charles Taylor (1996) lays some of the groundwork for such an account in his tribute to Iris Murdoch’s attempt to ground ethics in a search for the ‘good’. Dunne (2010: 12) describes Taylor’s evocation of three images of the unfolding horizons of moral space that can still be recovered from our culture. The first is that of the corral, expressing a restricted concern with moral rules governing what is the right thing to do. The key concepts here are those of justice and fairness. A wider horizon opens up with the image of the field in which morality is viewed as a concern for what kind of human life is it good to lead as a contribution to human flourishing. The third image, of the forest goes beyond the possibility of living a rich and flourishing life to the possibility of finding a supremely high good that can fully inspire one’s love. The latter may require one to suffer for the sake of such a higher good, and indeed to sacrifice one’s personal happiness.

The work of the spirit I would argue operates within and across all three moral spaces. A view of educational action research as the work of the spirit does not imply that it is divorced from the ethical dimensions of educational practice, but it does imply a commitment on the part of teachers to developing and deepening their understanding of themselves in relation to the goods and actions that define an educational practice. Such a commitment pre-supposes the possibility of representing these self-understandings in the form of propositions, the truth of which can be tested in action without being set in stone.

**Educational action research as the heartwork of teaching**
Pádraig Hogan (2010: 52–67) argues that teaching is a social practice, in the sense depicted by Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) in *After Virtue*, inasmuch as it has its own internal goods, the most important of which is ‘learning’. However, he points out that MacIntyre himself, in a debate with Joseph Dunne (see MacIntyre and Dunne 2004: 1–17), has denied that teaching is a practice, but simply a set of skills and habits put to the service of learning in a range of practices. It is never more than a means to an end. Hogan, however, attempts to demonstrate that it is impossible to view means and ends in teaching
independently of each other. Teaching, he argues, implies entering into a certain quality of relationship with the subject matter, with students, with one’s peers, and parents and members of the public, and with oneself. These relationships are inseparable from a view of learning as an end of teaching. For Hogan it is what he calls high quality learning in the form of ‘learning with understanding’ viewed as an end that makes teaching an educational practice, because it shapes the quality of the relationships that are involved in teaching. It implies teaching that nourishes rather than takes over the students’ individuality. ‘Learning with understanding’ is not an external good in relation to which teaching as a means can be independently defined. Rather it constitutes an internal good inasmuch as it defines the quality of the relationships that constitute teaching. In Hogan’s words the ends ‘are embodied, or exemplified in the means’.

In relation to the subject matter, Hogan argues that ‘learning with understanding’ relates the teacher to their subject matter as a ‘voice’ rather than a body of established knowledge, ‘something active, something that addresses us and calls forth a response’ whether it be ‘a quickening of interest, an aversion, a perplexity, or a range of other cognitive-affective stances, and in varying degrees of complexity’. When teachers conceive of their subject-matter as a voice it appeals to their and their students’ sensibilities in a way, Hogan contends, that something conceived simply as a body of information to be transmitted to students cannot.

In relation to students Hogan argues that teaching has to address issues of control that stem from apparently unequal power relationships. Certainly ‘learning with understanding’ in the context of a conversation with subject matter conceived by the teacher as a ‘voice’ will set very different ethical limits on teachers’ use of power in teaching to its use in effectively transmitting bodies of factual information to students.

In relation to peers, parents and the public generally Hogan argues that teaching should not be conducted in isolation from these ‘audiences’ but open to discussion. This is because teaching conceived as a complex social practice needs to be professionally and socially affirmed to be sustainable. What gets affirmed over time through discussion are shared understandings of the goods that are internal to the practice and their significance for human development. How these are best realised in the interactive classroom becomes a matter for research inside the practice context. I would argue that the importance of this third set of relationships lies in the recognition that educational values are not simply individual expressions of subjective feelings and emotions. They are internal goods of teaching that can be publicly affirmed and recognised.

The teacher’s relationship to him/herself takes the form of self-understanding, which, Hogan argues, draws the other relationships together as an orientation for thought and action. His or her self-understanding as a teacher shapes his/
her relationship to the subject matter, to the students, to colleagues and parents. Changes in that self-understanding bring about changes in those relationships. Hogan depicts the search for self-understanding as ‘heartwork’. Below is an extract from an example of ‘heartwork’ constructed by Hogan in the form of a first-person account. The extract is an account of what the teacher means by depicting his main aim as a commitment to his students’ ‘flourishing’ in his classroom. It is grounded in a description of what he does. Hence he does not attempt to define the end-in-view independently of the means he adopts to realise it in action. ‘Heartwork’ might well be cast as a form of action research that illustrates ‘the work of the spirit’ in teaching.

I regard it as important for my students to see that each of the subjects we study has something rich and enduring to offer. For instance, if I’m teaching history, or English, or science or religion, I’m keen to encourage the students individually, and as far as possible collectively, to discover something of the historian in themselves; or to discover something of linguistic attitude and appreciation in themselves, or to discover something of the scientist in themselves; or to discover something of their own religious sensibilities. None of this is to deny that it sometimes takes a lot of pain, faith and forbearance, and an alert sense of detection, to unearth this ‘something’. Nor is it to deny that the ‘something’ may look unremarkable when it is unearthed. This kind of discovery, however, and it happens in smaller or more significant ways in daily classroom life, marks in each case a learning achievement with longer-term consequences. It enables the student to understand something more of her own particular promise, of her own aptitudes and limitations. That’s to say it advances learning in the best sense of the word.

The picture is quite different if, however, in teaching history, I seek to inculcate in the students any allegiance to a tendentious version of the past; if, in teaching science, I seek to privilege one perspective over others, say in energy use or environmental care; if, in teaching English … I intimate that this language confers a badge of cultural or racial superiority; if, in teaching Religious Education, I treat matters of faith as if they were matters of fact. In short, I’ve put a foot wrong if, in any instance, my approach presumes some proprietorial claim on the minds and hearts of the students. … In fact, I believe that the explicit disavowal of such proprietorial claims is a ‘must’ for professional discipline in teaching. (Hogan 2010: 65–6)

It is interesting that in this illustration, taken as a whole, Hogan not only articulates the values that depict the internal goods of teaching as an educational practice (within the horizons of the field, and the forest also to the extent that he refers to the suffering involved in teaching) but it also begins to spell some principles governing actions that should be avoided in the classroom (viewed as the corral) as a condition of realising these values.
Choreographing teaching as the work of the spirit in professional communities of practice

What I now want to demonstrate is the design of a framework to support a process of collaborative action research amongst teachers that engaged them in the kind of professional ‘heartwork’ that Hogan has described. This framework helped to develop a choreography of teaching (see Harrington, in press) as an educational practice. My demonstration is drawn from the work of the *Ford Teaching Project* (1972–74), which I directed (see Elliott 2007: 30–62).

**Step 1: Clarifying the values that define the pedagogical aim**

The pedagogical aim of inquiry teaching was defined in terms of independent or self-directed thinking. This aim was then analysed into four basic freedoms for students. The following formulation represents the outcome of discussions with teachers who espoused the aim and had agreed to participate in the project:

1. to identify and initiate problems for inquiry;
2. to express their own ideas and develop lines of inquiry;
3. to discuss problems, ideas and evidence;
4. to test hypotheses and evaluate evidence.

**Step 2: Specifying the procedural principles implied by the pedagogical aim**

The pedagogical implications of the four freedoms of Inquiry Learning were then specified as a set of negative and positive procedural principles for orientating the role of teachers. The negative principles emphasised the teacher’s responsibility to refrain from actions that impose constraints on students exercising these freedoms, with a reminder also to do all in their power to protect students from other forms of external constraint. The positive principles emphasise the teacher’s responsibility to intervene in the learning process in ways that actually enhance students’ capabilities to exercise the freedoms. Implicit in the procedural principles is a distinction between the negative and positive aspects of freedom. Students, for example, may be free from external constraints on their freedom to express their own ideas and develop them into hypotheses but still be unable to exercise this freedom because they lacked the necessary capabilities.
Step 3: Gathering and analysing evidence about the problems of Inquiry Teaching and testing action hypotheses about how they might be resolved

The framework of aims and principles was subsequently used by Ford T teachers to gather and analyse data about the problems of engaging students in Inquiry Learning and testing strategies to ameliorate them. In the light of it they were able to identify the extent to which their teaching strategies constrained or facilitated Inquiry Learning, and to compare and contrast their experience across a range and variety of classroom, school and curriculum contexts. Over time they were able to discern certain universal patterns of interaction in each other’s classrooms that were problematic for the realisation of their pedagogical aim, and began to experiment with strategies for changing them in discussion with each other. Below are two illustrations of how teachers used the framework of values and principles to represent insights they had come to share.

Illustration 1: The freedom to express ideas and develop lines of inquiry

Procedural Principles
(a) Refrain from preventing students expressing their own ideas and developing lines of inquiry.
(b) Help students to develop their own ideas and lines of inquiry.

Constraint
Subject-Centred Focusing
When the teacher’s questions focus students’ attention solely on the subject matter, rather than on their own ideas about it, s/he may prevent them from initiating or developing their own ideas. Such focusing will be interpreted as an attempt to find out whether they know what s/he expects them to know.

Constraint Removing Strategy
Refrain from framing your questions in terms which draw attention exclusively to the subject matter rather than students’ thoughts about it.

Guidance Strategy
Ask person-centered questions which focus the students’ attention on their own ideas with respect to the subject matter.

Illustration 2: The freedom to discuss problems, ideas and evidence

Procedural Principles
(a) Refrain from restricting students’ access to discussion.
(b) Help pupils to learn how to discuss.
**Constraint**

*Reinforcing ideas*

When the teacher responds to students’ ideas with utterances like ‘good’, ‘yes’, ‘interesting’ and so on, s/he may prevent others from expressing alternative ideas. Such utterances may be interpreted as rewards for providing the responses required by the teacher.

*Constraint Removing Strategy*

Refrain from utterances that might imply finality such as ‘yes’, ‘good’, ‘right’.

*Guidance Strategy*

Reward students for their contributions to discussion by listening carefully to their remarks and asking others to do so.

The idea behind the construction of such a knowledge base was to provide other teachers, who embraced a similar pedagogical aim, with a set of diagnostic and action-hypotheses to examine, test, refine and further develop in relation to their own pedagogical practices. Hence, it was hoped that other teachers might avoid constantly ‘reinventing the wheel’, while having space for exercising personal judgments in an on-going process of collaborative professional knowledge construction.

This kind of knowledge base may seem terribly mundane and ordinary to represent it as the work of the spirit, but this underestimates the ‘heartwork’ involved in overcoming prejudices and pre-dispositions to achieve the levels of self-understanding it represents. Such an achievement depended on a shared commitment to an educational aim and a willingness to acknowledge that many of the prejudices and predispositions that hinder its realisation in practice are held in common. The work of the spirit in teaching depends on the formation of communities of practice. Its major enemy is the culture of individualism that still shapes teaching and learning in many school systems and in doing so distorts the development of ‘educational practice’.

**References**


Chapter 1

Community action research
Providing evidence of value and virtue

Josephine Bleach

Introduction

In today’s economic climate, with an increased emphasis on producing ‘evidence’ and ‘outcomes’, how do action researchers meet the requests from policy makers and funders for independent scientific evaluation and/or evidenced-based programmes? In this chapter I examine how to gather data during an action research process to demonstrate that programmes have improved the educational outcomes, interactions and environment of participants. I also look at how the learning from data can be used to inform practice, build capacity, manage change, influence national policy and secure funding. Much of the content of the chapter is underpinned by the work of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), which is a community-based educational initiative in the Dublin Docklands. Influenced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), we aim to enhance children’s complex interactions with their immediate environment by providing educational support for them and their families over the course of the children’s education. Acknowledging, respecting and utilising the expertise and experience within the local families and communities is part of our ethos.

Community action research, with its emphasis on building cross-organisational learning communities to undertake action research projects (Senge and Scharmer 2001), was chosen as our research methodology as it encouraged bottom-up, flexible, continuous and cooperative change. As we believe that successful implementation depends on changing behaviour (Medical Research Council [MRC] 2008), we hope to improve our educational practices collectively, by thinking differently, acting differently and relating to one another differently (Kemmis 2009). A cumulative approach to knowledge generation (Blamey and Mackenzie 2007) is taken, where learning accumulates slowly within and across evaluation rather than delivering ‘big bang’ answers to questions of programme effectiveness.

Over the past six years, the process of community action research has given direction, meaning and motivation to our project (Tuohy 1997) and ensured that our programmes are both implemented, and are also being continuously
evaluated and improved to meet the on-going educational needs of our community. It has created an excitement about education in the community and has established concrete contexts for further deepening common purpose and building our practical know-how (Senge and Scharmer 2001).

However, in the policy context in which we work there is a growing demand for programmes like ELI to be evidence-based, with randomised control trials considered the 'gold-standard' i.e. more robust and superior to other forms of evidence generation for the purpose of judging the impact of a programme (Veerman and van Yperen 2007). Action research does not have the same status as, and is not perceived as an acceptable substitute for independent external scientific evaluation (Bamber et al. 2010). We have found independent evaluations useful in providing baseline data, endorsing the work of the project and highlighting future directions. However, being summative, rather than formative, external research does not provide the process or on-going data required for continuous improvement and community building. Nor does it develop the capacity, ownership and participation required for implementation. In addition, the amount of resources required from projects like ours to support external research is often underestimated. Briefing external researchers, acting as gatekeepers, along with accommodating the agendas and time schedules of the research teams can impact on our programme implementation and service delivery. At this stage, while we continue to welcome external research, we would like to strengthen our community action research approach in order to build our capacity to produce robust evidence of the outcomes and potential impact of our programmes.

In this paper I examine how we, in ELI, are grappling with the issues and dilemmas posed by the official technical-rational discourse of ‘evidence-based practice’. Using one of our programmes, the Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) as an example, I explain how we use a community action research (Senge and Scharmer 2001) approach to collect and utilise data to show measurable indicators of outcomes and impact, while retaining our core principle of meeting the learning needs of our community.

Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP)
Originally from the United States, the Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) is an innovative, home based literacy and parenting programme that aims to strengthen families and prepare children to succeed academically. Over a two year period, trained Home Visitors model oral language, reading and play for children (18 months–3 years) and parents in their twice weekly visits. The families continue these activities in their own time. The Home Visitors are all local women, most of whom are early school leavers, who have been employed and trained by NCI to deliver the programme. They are our ambassadors
for education and the work of ELI on the street. Easily recognisable in their distinctive uniforms, they provide an accessible point of contact, information and referral for families.

Over twenty years of rigorous research have demonstrated the program’s success in various areas of the United States (PCHP, 2013). The evaluation of our programme in the Docklands by the Children’s Research Centre, Trinity College, has highlighted the positive impact of the programme on the families involved, with parents expressing a high degree of satisfaction with the programme (Share et al. 2011a). Learning and using a different approach to reading and playing with their child was the main benefit for parents of the programme. Most children were developing normally for their age, while being involved with PCHP has generated considerable personal and professional benefits for the Home Visitors.

**Process of action research**

In ELI, we agreed with Senge and Scharmer (2001: 240) that community action research begins by creating a learning community that works together to ‘nurture and sustain a knowledge-creating system’, based on valuing equally each other and the following three interacting domains of activity:

- **Research**: a disciplined approach to discovery and understanding, with a commitment to share what is learned.
- **Capacity-building**: enhancing people’s awareness and capabilities, individually and collectively, to produce results they truly care about.
- **Practice**: people working together to achieve practical outcomes.

While all three areas seem to be working well within ELI, the increasing official technical-rational discourse of ‘evidence-based practice’, along with the completion of the baseline evaluation of ELI by the Children’s Research Centre, Trinity College (Share et al. 2011b), has led us to reflect on and review our existing research practices, particularly in relation to the data we collect. We also want to ensure that our research processes incorporate Chelimsky and Shadish’s (1997) three perspectives on evaluation: evaluation for development, evaluation for knowledge building and evaluation for accountability.

ELI is a complex community initiative involving parents, children and staff from all sectors of the community. NCI acts as the lead agency and takes responsibility for the data collection, analysis and reporting. Its staff liaises between the various community services and organises meetings and events, where we focus on how best we can work together to support the learning needs of the children in the area. This participatory approach respects and utilises the expertise and experience of all involved, while at the same time supporting everyone to reflect on and improve their practice, both individually and collectively.
Our community action research approach operates at two levels. Level one focuses on the overall direction and development of the project, while level two addresses each individual programme. At both levels, this requires the implementation of the Initiative’s guiding principles, a process that supports community building as well as collaborative projects that focus on key change issues (Senge and Scharmer 2001) as agreed by the participants. The process used has evolved over the years from a simplistic ‘plan, do, review’ model (Lewin 1946) to a more complex annual cycle of communication, evaluation, planning and implementation (Figure 1) through which we, as a community of learners, investigate and evaluate our own practices and programmes (McNiff and Whitehead 2006).

It has grown into a developmental process of incremental change, informed by data and judgement that has led to the significant cumulative evolution of our programmes (Patton 1994).

Organisational and evaluation structures have been developed to support the process in a systematic, inclusive and collaborative way (Senge and Scharmer 2001). All involved are encouraged to analyse the programmes and to think abstractly and objectively on how they can be improved (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Key questions are: What have you learned? What have the children learned? How has it made a difference to your practice? Examining what has not worked is as important as examining what works. If outcome targets and other expectations have not been met, a key accountability question is ‘what has been learned as a result and what will change in the future?’ (Mayne

---

**Figure 1.1: Community Action Research Cycle**
Mistakes are seen as an opportunity to learn from what went wrong and how to do better next time. This allows us to make modifications to our programmes as they develop and enables theory to emerge from practice rather than following a previously formulated theory (Koshy 2005: 21).

The next sections look at our approach to collecting and utilising data to evidence outcomes and impact. This enables us to improve programmes, satisfy objective scrutiny and influence thinking in the public sphere.

**Indicators for outcomes and impact**

In order to gather the evidence required for continuous improvement, it is important to begin by developing benchmarks against which to measure progress along with criteria or indicators for success. At present, we are finding Veerman and van Yperen’s (2007) Categories of Evidence Model (Table 1.1) very useful in helping us to clarify our thinking around how we can provide an evidence-based structure for our programmes. Taking real-world intervention as its starting point, it encompasses different levels of evidence, ranging from minimum level evidence to the higher-end randomised control trials ‘gold standard’ level of evidence. The four levels of evidence constitute a continuum,

---

**Table 1.1: Categories of Evidence Model (adapted from Veerman and van Yperen 2007: 216)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Evidence</th>
<th>Parameters of Evidence</th>
<th>Effectiveness of interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Causal</td>
<td>Sound and substantial evidence that the outcomes are as a result of the programme and/or clear evidence showing which ingredients of the programme are responsible for the outcomes i.e. repeated case studies or randomised control trial</td>
<td>Efficacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indicative</td>
<td>Systematic evaluation with evidence showing that the desired changes have occurred i.e. goals and outcomes are attained, competencies increased, high satisfaction rates</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theoretical</td>
<td>Sound, plausible programme rationale or theory to explain why a programme should work and with whom</td>
<td>Plausible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Descriptive</td>
<td>Clear, explicit specification of essential elements of programme: goals, target groups, methods and activities</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with Level 4 considered the optimum. The lower levels allow participants greater freedom to choose a study design but provide less certainty about the effectiveness of a particular programme. The higher levels allow less flexibility in the delivery of programme and study design but more certainty about the effectiveness of a particular programme.

We believe that generating indicative evidence (at Level 3) on an annual basis along with the data from ELI’s baseline evaluation (Share et al. 2011b) and other independent research will enable us to generate causal evidence (Level 4) and judge whether or not our programmes are efficacious. Using repeated case studies rather than randomised control trials enables us to integrate the community action research approach into our evaluation processes. As the research is done by participants rather than external researchers, it builds capacity within the community and provides us with the on-going data and context for group reflection, discussion and decision-making in an evolving, rapidly changing environment of constant feedback and change (Patton 1994).

Work is on-going on developing key performance indicators for our programmes. Our focus at present is on combining the outcome measures into a small number of generally accepted summary measures, through which we can show a consistent pattern of effects across action research cycles (MRC 2008). At present, indicative evidence (Veereman and van Yperen 2007) that a programme is successful is based on the following criteria: participation, learning outcomes, educational aspirations, programme satisfaction and impact. The results are compared to Irish national norms, the baseline data in the Reports by the Children’s Research Centre, Trinity College (Share et al. 2011b) along with previous data collected through community action research processes. More details on this are provided below in the analysis of data.

Collecting data

While action research is open-minded about what counts as data, it involves keeping records that describe what is happening as accurately as possible (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). Therefore, we have tried to build systematic and effective processes for collecting and analysing data into the action research process from the beginning (Figure 1.1) in order to measure the impact and outcomes of our programmes. Key questions are: Why are we collecting this data? What do we hope to use it for? A variety of instruments, including questionnaires, interviews, observational data, photography and documents (Cohen et al. 2000) are used. While appreciating that every method involves a trade-off between its relative strengths and limitations (Darlington and Scott 2002), we try to choose the most suitable method
for the task in hand. We also use multiple methods, where possible, as this allows for triangulation, which creates confidence in the accuracy of our findings. Our emphasis is on collecting quality data, linked to our key success criteria. Qualitative data is collected as it emphasises the process and allows the participants’ perspectives to be taken into account (Blaxter et al. 2001). It can also show the immediate effects of the programme and allow us to adapt the programme as it is being implemented. Quantitative data is also collected as it helps in demonstrating generalisability and allows us to measure service delivery and outcomes in numeric terms. The following sections describe our main research tools along with examples of how data is collected as part of the action research process.

**Questionnaires**

We have found questionnaires, administered as evaluation forms following the completion of an activity, a relatively quick and cost effective way of gathering information. They also involve no observer/interviewer effects (Bee and Bee 2003), while providing quantitative data for the purposes of triangulation and reporting. Short and easy to complete, ELI’s evaluation forms are carefully designed to ensure clarity and lack of ambiguity (Bee and Bee 2003). There is a mix of open and closed questions, which provide quantitative and qualitative data on satisfaction rates and impact on practice and learning. We also ask participants to critique the programme and tell us what aspects were most beneficial to them and suggest areas of improvement. Standardising questions across the evaluation forms enables us to ask key questions that may be compared across programmes.

**Observations**

Participant observation, a qualitative-ethnographic research method (McKernan 1996) is also used. It enables us to grasp multiple perspectives in a natural social setting (Neuman 2004 p.268) and is useful in identifying and assessing trends, patterns and styles of behaviour (Alder and Alder 1998; Simpson and Tuson 2003). For ELI, observation is an essential trait of a reflective practitioner. Observation forms and monthly reports are used to record observations. Entries are normally brief, consisting mainly of participation rates, significant events, particular issues that may have arisen, the thoughts and perceptions of the observer as well as comments or suggestions from participants (Koshy 2005). Opportunistic ‘on the wing’ discussions with others are also recorded (Robson 1993). The observations are used to gain insights into how a programme is working, what needs to be improved and what changes could be made. They are also used to supplement the data obtained by other means such as evaluation forms and formal interviews.
Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence includes programme plans, policies, photographs, minutes of meetings, monthly and end-of-year reports. These provide a useful background and context for the project along with supporting other forms of evidence. By providing a record of agreements and targets, they allow us to compare plans with what has actually happened in practice (Koshy 2005).

Interviews

Interviews are used to gather in-depth information and/or explore complex issues. They take different forms, from the unstructured to the highly structured, from the individual interview to the focus group. Unstructured interviews are usually conducted informally as part of our on-going observations and take place during events and activities. Structured interviews are scheduled as meetings at the beginning and end of programmes. Group interviews, usually in the form of review meetings, are useful in achieving consensus on the direction of ELI and the development of individual programmes. They allow us to appreciate how the programme is being implemented in different services with the cross-flow of communication sparking ideas that would never emerge in one-to-one meetings. However, there are disadvantages in that some individuals find it difficult to discuss personal experiences publicly and there can be peer pressure to conform to the views of the majority. One-to-one meetings enable us to resolve these issues.

Assessment of and for learning

A major theme in public discourse in relation to programmes like ELI is the production of measurable outcomes. Following the completion of the Parent Child Home Programme’s (PCHP) baseline evaluation (Share et al. 2011a), we introduced an internal evaluation of PCHP children’s learning outcomes in 2011-12. Its aim was twofold. One was the immediate goal of being able to demonstrate children’s learning over the two-year programme. The second was to build the capacity of both parents and the Home Visitors who deliver the programme to discuss and assess children’s learning. The PCHP Evaluation of Child’s Behaviour Traits (CBT) template was chosen as the assessment tool. A behavioural check list, it is completed by the Home Visitors and parents twice a year – at the beginning of the year between the 4th and 6th visit in November and at the end of the year after Easter. Following a review in September 2012, when the Home Visitors expressed concerns that key aspects of their work were not included in the tool, additional statements, which focused on language, literacy and numeracy development, were added.
In addition, standardised test results in English and Maths at 7 years and 12 years are collected from the local schools who participate in our programmes. This information is aggregated and compared with the baseline data collected by the Children’s Research Centre, Trinity College (Share et al. 2011b) along with data from national evaluations.

Analysis of data – generating evidence from the data

Within ELI, evaluation for learning is a core activity, with all participants gathering data on what is being learned, how and by whom. Throughout the process, we have to analyse the data critically and think abstractly and objectively about what has been learned and what needs to be done next (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As we, within ELI, control all aspects of the research, we have to be aware and understand how it can be influenced by our conceptual frameworks, biases and assumptions (Darlington and Scott 2002). Therefore, it is important that we can produce robust evidence to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of our programmes. This requires explicit criteria against which we can check the authenticity of the data and evidence within the broader exercise of testing the validity of our claims (McNiff 2013).

As stated previously, developing key performance indicators for our programmes, which will enable us to determine whether the intended effect of a programme has occurred, is a work in progress. At present, indicative evidence (Veerman and van Yperen 2007) that a programme is successful is based on the following criteria: participation, learning outcomes, educational aspirations, programme satisfaction, and impact. Veerman and van Yperen (2007: 217) suggested that a treatment can be considered successful when 95% of the clients are satisfied with the service received; all the treatment goals are attained in 90% of the cases; and 80% of the clients show behaviour that is now within the normal range according to a standardised assessment instrument. We have used these quality standards as reference points for evaluation purposes in order to determine signs of effectiveness and causality.

With the external evaluation (Share et al. 2011b) finding high satisfaction rates among programme participants, we have adopted the standard of 95% or more participants as indicating satisfaction, as evidenced by the completion of evaluation forms. Standardising questions across the evaluation forms enables us to say that 97% (N=1,424) of those (N=1,467) who filled out evaluation forms from 2008–2012 agreed that ELI’s programmes were useful to their practice.

The standard that 90% of the goals of a programme are attained is used to determine impact. Between 2009–2012, 96% (N=109) of parents, who were involved in the Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) felt confident in using strategies for reading and playing with their children. Analysis of the open questions highlighted that parents felt that their children’s literacy, numeracy
and language skills had improved as a result of the programme. While providing them with information about children’s learning, the programme had also improved the parents’ interactions with their children. Parents told us that the programme helped them to understand the importance of education from an early age as well as supporting them to ‘come down to the child’s level’, ‘listen more and really take an interest’ in what their children are saying. As one father in the programme said, ‘It’s a winner!! My son takes out the books and either my wife or I would read with him most nights. I have seen the improvement’.

The criterion that 80% of participants are within the normal range is used to determine if PCHP is effective in improving learning outcomes for the children involved. The PCHP Evaluation of Child’s Behaviour Traits (CBT) assessments are analysed bi-annually to monitor each child’s progress over the two-year programme. Success is defined as 80% of the children involved achieving a cumulative score of 54 or above. As can be seen from the graph below (Figure 2), 92% of children improved from November 2011 to November 2012. All are now scoring 54 points or above. This corroborates the external research (Share et al. 2011a) that the children involved in PCHP are, unlike children in similar disadvantaged areas, performing at levels expected for their age.

Participation or attendance rates, which assess dosage i.e. the number of contact hours an individual or group has with ELI staff (Centre for Effective Services 2011), are carefully monitored for all programmes. Combining and analysing the attendance records for all programmes enables us to say that over 3,000 people in the Docklands took part in an ELI programme in 2011-

Figure 1.2 Parent Child Home Programme CBT Assessment Results
12, which is 500 more that in 2010-11. In line with Irish national norms as outlined in the Educational Welfare Act 2000, 90% attendance over the course of a programme is considered successful. For PCHP, 100% attendance is 46 visits per year or 92 over 2 years; therefore we can say that if a family has received 41 or more visits per year, they have participated fully in the programme. In 2011–12, the 77 families in PCHP received 3,202 home visits, which is an average of 40 visits per family. This evidence informs the discussion on how we can improve participation rates in the programme.

We believe that this data provides powerful evidence of effectiveness and causality, particularly when it is gathered on a systematic basis, over several action research cycles. As stated previously, examining what has not worked is as important as examining what worked. Unlike traditional research, the aim is not for the final answer (McNiff 2010) but for the data to be used as part of the dialogue that makes learning visible and enables continuous improvement, both formally and informally.

**Telling the story and communicating the findings**

Communication and language matter because what we call what we do affects what we do and how we do it (Patton 1994). It also impacts on how others perceive us and their relationship with us. Communicating the outcomes and learning from community action research, both internally and externally, is crucial to the sustainability and success of ELI. While we acknowledge that passive strategies for disseminating the findings, such as reports, newsletters, research papers and other publications are useful, we also agree with the MRC (2008) that interactive strategies are more effective at convincing decision-makers and ensuring that the research findings are translated into routine practice and policy. The next two sections examine how we communicate our findings – internally among our ‘learning community’ (Senge and Scharmer 2001) and externally to decision makers, politicians and the general public.

**Internal Communication**

Effective internal communication requires regular structured opportunities for dynamic conversations (Schön 1983), focused on programme outcomes and their implications for practice. Our findings are always included on the agendas for our regular review and planning meetings with small group discussions providing a safe, yet challenging, space for participants to discuss and analyse theory, research findings and lived experiences (Herr and Anderson 2005). We have found that for some participants, taking part in discussions with others was very difficult initially. Many were unfamiliar with the language and concepts being used and felt that they had not the ‘words’ or language to express their
opinions. Some found it a challenge to make explicit practices that were until now implicit. Others needed to develop the confidence to speak about their practice in front of practitioners from other settings. For one participant, the best part about the programme was:

Learning from other crèches and overcoming my fears and speaking out in front of everyone with my thoughts and making an input to the discussion.

We believe, like Cook (2006), that the importance of the process itself should not be underestimated, especially in relation to how it can encourage and support individuals to develop their own personal and professional voices. Giving a genuine voice to people in this way, we have found, ensures that the evidence is understood and accepted by those most involved in a programme (Kellam and Langevin 2003). It supports the implementation of change in a way that enhances our capabilities, both individually and collectively, to produce results we truly care about (Senge and Scharmer 2001). The community action research process has also been instrumental in helping us to develop our skills in communicating with others in the public sphere (McNiff 2010).

**External Communication**

While sharing the data and the learning among the internal stakeholders is important, particularly for programme improvement and community building, our findings need to reach a wider audience if our project is to attract funding and influence thinking in the public sphere (McNiff 2010). The task is two-fold and requires a high level of political sophistication (McNiff and Whitehead 2006). Our first task is to influence general thinking and discourses, while the second is to influence policy formation and implementation. To achieve these aims, we need to develop a thoughtful and targeted dissemination strategy (Patton and Horton 2008). In ELI, we have found that several different aspects need to be considered when developing our dissemination strategy. The first is to define and understand the policy context in which we operate. This is crucial for identifying our target audience, particularly the decision-makers who can help us access funding. People, not organisations, are interested in and will use your evidence (Patton and Horton 2008). In ELI, we have found it important to recruit others, including advocates, communication brokers and allies, who will take direct, personal responsibility for getting the findings to key decision-makers and stakeholders, including politicians at all levels of government (Rossi *et al.* 2004). We have also learned not to underestimate the power of the ripple effects and therefore encourage and support all involved in ELI to disseminate the outcomes and learning through their own networks. Effective internal communication as outlined in the previous section is vital in helping us to develop our ability to engage successfully with a diverse audience.
Information needs to be provided in accessible formats and disseminated actively (MRC 2008) with different audiences requiring different information. Understanding your audience and the context in which they operate is critical. In ELI, we begin by identifying which aspects of our findings are most relevant to particular recipients. This enables us to translate the findings into useful and understandable information, stories and policy measures that the recipients can relate to. Strategic decisions are then made about the most effective means of communication to ensure regular, structured engagement with a wide audience. We find e-mails very useful to send regular newsletters and updates and we have also just established a Facebook page, which can support communication within the community. While written communication is important, face to face meetings are the building blocks of relationships and allow us to discuss our findings and their implications for policy and practice in depth. These can range from private one-to-one meetings, invitations to ELI events and/or attendance at networking events, such as conferences and launches. Getting involved in public consultations and debates also allows us to explain what works for us and its significance for the wider policy context.

As can be seen from Figure 1.1, communication is a key element of our community action research process. It is an on-going challenge to engage all the stakeholders, both external and internal, in dynamic conversations (Schön 1983) about the work of ELI. Having data and evidence of outcomes and impact to present at regular intervals is crucial in keeping policy makers and funders informed, interested and involved in our project.

**Conclusion**

Externally imposed measures of quality have traditionally been held up as more objective and hence reliable indicators and measures (Cook 2006). However, ELI has found that while external evaluations can provide useful information and endorse the work done through action research, they do not provide the process or on-going data required for continuous improvement and community building. Nor do they develop the capacity, ownership and participation required for creating and maintaining both formal and informal dialogue with government bodies, policy makers and funders.

We believe that for action research to acquire the recognition and prestige of other methodologies, a disciplined strategy to both the collection and use of data is required. Providing evidence of outcomes and impact, which highlights both successes and challenges, needs to be a core element of every action research project, if it is to be taken seriously as a research methodology in the public sphere (McNiff 2010). This paper outlined how ELI uses a community action research approach (Senge and Scharmer 2001) to collect and utilise data to show measurable indicators of outcomes and impact. We believe that
generating indicative evidence (Veerman and van Yperen 2007) using multiple research methods over repeated action research cycles will enable us to generate causal evidence and judge whether or not our programmes are efficacious. This meets the requests from policy makers and funders for independent scientific evaluation and/or evidenced-based programmes.

Good communication, using a variety of media and forums, to a range of audiences, both external and internal, will be the key to sharing the learning and advocating for on-going support for community action research projects like ELI. Incorporating dynamic conversations (Schön 1983) about programme outcomes and implementation into the action research process is critical to convincing stakeholders and decision makers of the authenticity of the evidence. Enabling programme participants to speak ‘multiple languages’ (McNiff and Whitehead 2009), including the official technical-rational discourse, across a range of cultures and spheres enhances our engagement with policy makers and funders. It provides them with living, interactive evidence of the impact of our programmes on the lives and practice of real people in our community.

References


Chapter 2

To act or not to act?
That is the question!¹

Pip Bruce Ferguson

Introduction
The year was 2003. I was a new Research Manager working in a Māori tertiary institution that had a history of inequitable treatment by government, through not receiving establishment funding that had gone unproblematically to non-Māori institutions. Repeating a common pattern in New Zealand, our government had decided to implement a research funding scheme derived from the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE as it then was). Ours was to be called the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) but, unlike in the UK RAE, ours was to be measured at the level of the individual academic, not at unit level.

My first job at Te Wānanga² o Aotearoa (TWoA) had been to compile a research register. This was at the request of the deputy Tumuaki (CEO), who was concerned that only eight pieces of research had been declared in 1999, and only 15 in 2000. He, like myself, could see that a lot more research than that was occurring in the institution, but that staff were not counting legitimate work as research, particularly in the area of creative arts. He could see that with the forthcoming PBRF, government research funding that had previously been received via student enrolments would be abated and eventually disappear. In this new PBRF environment, we had to know who was doing research, at what level, and get it recorded and counted. Accordingly, I travelled around the many campuses of TWoA seeking to identify work that could be counted as research, and asking permission from the authors to list their work in the Wānanga’s first-ever Research Register. It covered the years 2001 and 2002. That Register, produced in 2003, listed 97 pieces of work in 2001, and 131 in 2002, plus other scholarly activity.

The PBRF’s first assessment exercise was due to be conducted in June, 2003. We had strong support from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), part of the Education function of government, to participate. There were three wānanga of suitable size in New Zealand at the time, and government officials were particularly keen to ensure that the PBRF covered a broad cross-section of tertiary providers, including universities, polytechnics, Private Training...
Establishments (PTEs) and wānanga. It helped that the definition of research the TEC had settled on was very broad, and enabled us to count all kinds of creative research. However, TWoA’s decision to participate in the PBRF was not without its difficulties, and it is here that the ethics of participation become problematic.

**Whose values and interests? Promoted by whom?**

The Wānanga had been established as a pan-tribal, multicultural institution, but one that was based on sound Māori values and processes. Our staff and student cohorts were welcoming to all who wished to join in the work, so my appointment as Research Manager, given that I am not Māori, attracted little negative comment. We had established a Research Committee that considered funding and ethics applications for staff research, and we were also represented (through my line manager, the deputy Tumuaki) at senior management meetings.

The PBRF raised issues that needed careful consideration. There is a Māori proverb that translates, ‘The kumara [a sweet potato] does not speak of its own sweetness’, and this is deemed to mean that one does not praise one’s own work. But to achieve the highest scores in the PBRF, researchers had to engage in a blatant self-promotion process, claiming ownership of work at the highest level possible in order to maximise personal grades, and hence payment of research funds to the institution. We knew that this would make many feel extremely uncomfortable. There is also a sense for many Māori that knowledge is not the possession of an individual, but is developed through group processes, and often is the result of work by those who have gone before, such as ancestors or elders. So to claim ownership of research work at an individual level was problematic (Smith and Bruce Ferguson 2006; Tawhai, Pihera and Bruce Ferguson 2004). These issues were later noted in an evaluation of the first round of PBRF by Web Research (2004) and summarised in a PBRF Sector Reference Group report (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009), which noted:

- concerns that the PBRF design ‘does not take account of Māori epistemology, or the stage of development of wānanga’
- difficulties in preparing evidence relating to indigenous research because of a number of factors: lack of appropriate world class journals, significance of oral traditions, ‘peer review’ being conducted in the wider community not academia, the need for research to be of use to the community, differences in research methodologies, ‘rediscovering’ knowledge from community members, cultural barriers to self-promotion, ethical barriers, and
- the perception that Māori research was undervalued because it was not regarded as world class due to its national or regional focus (see Web Research 2004).
A further report evaluating the 2006 partial round of PBRF also noted that Māori values were likely to be breached by the process. White and Grice (2008) commented that:

…the production of an EP [Evidence Portfolio] does not fit with Māori values such as humility, whakahahi [arrogance, bigheadedness] and whakaiti [to belittle, in this context probably meaning to minimise the contribution of others] (quoted on p.13 of Tertiary Education Commission, 2009, original paper no longer available).

So why would we at TWoA even think about participating in a process which had such inherent difficulties, regardless of TEC’s warm encouragement of our participation? Prior to discussing this thorny question, I wish to present some research on the ethics of participation (or not).

**Virtuous behaviour?**

In my investigation of this work in a paper presented at the Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research Conference (Bruce Ferguson 2012) I considered work by Veenstra (2006). Veenstra was discussing the notion of virtue, and whether it is an ideal or a constrained situation, drawing on the work of Swanton (2005) to do so. He wrote:

…virtue is a threshold concept which means that states which are ‘less than ideal’ could also be considered virtuous. Consequently, whilst Swanton acknowledges that the virtues set a standard for responsiveness, that a virtue is a disposition to respond well, and that self-improvement towards excellence is desirable, she also acknowledges that the virtues are complex, and that virtuous agents are susceptible to constraint (Veenstra, 2006: 14–15).

I claim as part of my own educational and life values that I seek to act in ways that minimise social injustice, and that promote equity. For this reason I was, for many years, a voluntary networker for New Zealand’s Human Rights Commission. I have almost always sought to take action to rectify injustice where I see it happening, when it is within my power to do so. In the case of the Wānanga, both the deputy Tumuaki and I could see that research funding previously received through student enrolments would be permanently lost unless we participated in PBRF, and did as well as we could in that exercise. From my point of view, this meant that taxes paid by Māori taxpayers would go to support research done in monocultural institutions, but not be available to an institution such as ours, which operates on Māori values and processes. This seemed inherently unfair.

But the situation was not straightforward. Describing the notion of constraint in virtues, Veenstra stated that
Constraint would then have us believe that it is morally preferable not to take action even if the resulting inaction brings about a result which itself is morally objectionable or undesirable (2006: 24).

Was it more morally objectionable to introduce into the Wānanga a process that we recognised might be flawed and would operate using values that could be antithetical to Māori values? Or should we ‘take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them’ – in other words participate fully in the process in the hopes of gaining much-needed research funds and boosting the Wānanga’s reputation? The notion of constraint in virtuous behaviour suggests that we should not have taken action. However, in consultation with the Research Committee, senior management (most of whom were Māori) and with the blessing of the Tumuaki, we decided to engage in the process.

The TEC staff were as helpful as they could possibly have been, providing training for my junior researcher before she went around the country helping staff to put together their Evidence Portfolios. When the assessment exercise happened, TWoA came out sixteenth equal with the local polytechnic, which had received substantially more research funding than we had in the past, and which should, therefore, have had a much sounder base for participation. This result guaranteed increased research funding for TWoA for the next nine years, until the 2012 full PBRF exercise.

So, what’s the problem? Well, I was subsequently taken to task by my then line-manager, not the person with whom I had, in consultation with senior TWoA staff, introduced and promoted the PBRF. This manager accused me of introducing ‘viruses without vaccines’, in other words that I had done similar destructive work to that of British soldiers who had evidently given American Indian tribes pox-ridden blankets, resulting in the deaths of thousands. I wrote about this in the paper I delivered at the Second International Value and Virtue conference (Bruce Ferguson 2012), so I do not propose to discuss this accusation further here, except to note that from the manager’s perspective, my ‘virtuous’ action in seeking to ensure that TWoA got its fair share of the research ‘cake’ had had negative consequences beyond what I had envisaged.

The situation is a clear example of Veenstra’s caution about constraint, mentioned above. Veenstra subsequently noted (2006: 38), that ‘That which constitutes “best” possible action in a given situation can be a contentious issue when more than one agent is involved’. This was exacerbated, in my situation, by the fact that I am not Māori. Although I had done my best to consult, and the decision to participate in the PBRF was taken by the senior management group, most of whom were Māori, I was still operating in a context in which I may not have perceived nuances that a Māori Research Manager might have picked up. It is, perhaps, illustrative that of the other two major wānanga in the country, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi (probably the most prominent
in terms of its level of teaching, and of its research) chose not to engage at all. Te Wānanga o Raukawa, which specialises in indigenous research, chose to participate only in terms of declaring its external research income, not in the quality measure that required individual assessment. Its reasoning was that:

Our kaupapa [way of operating] is Māori, it’s indigenous. When you get caught up into global criteria, you kind of generalise everything, and we don’t want to. We want to be very specific about where we’re at (Greenwood and Te Aika, 2008: 69).

TWoA itself has subsequently been cautious about its engagement with PBRF. In 2010, continuing my warm connections with the institution from which I had by then departed, I received a copy of their 2009 Research Register He Pataka Tangata, He Pataka Kai. In this, Te Kapua Hohepa-Watene reflects on research development at the Wānanga, using the metaphor of a canoe to do so.

As the flag was being raised [on the canoe] a bird called ‘PBRF’ landed on it and asked if it could change the shape and colour of the flag. The kaiarahi [leaders] were not happy with the proposed changes and said, ‘Kaore [no]. If we changed the flag it wouldn’t look, feel or fly right,’ so the bird flew away (Hohepa-Watene, Te K. 2009: 7, cited in Ferguson and Ferguson 2010: 7).

Subsequently, a separate funding stream has now been suggested to provide research funding to all wānanga, recognising the deficiencies already mentioned (and quite a few others that I have not traversed in this chapter) for Māori researchers.

So, should we act or shouldn’t we act?

As Shakespeare (and Hamlet) said (although speaking of ‘being’ rather than ‘acting’), that is the question. This book is about values, how our work-based research demonstrates our values, whether and how these are virtuous, and how we can explain our work in light of these values and virtues. I have explained that prime among my particular values are that I seek to ensure that equity and social justice prevail in the contexts in which I live and work, and I would claim that my actions towards these ends are virtuous behaviour.

My work-based practice has been supported, in later years, by the work of theorists such as Paulo Freire (Ferguson 1991, my Masters thesis) and Foucault (Bruce Ferguson 1999, my PhD thesis). Both of these authors are men who argued for positive action to change one’s context for the better. Freire was such a living proponent of this approach that he was exiled from his home country for doing so, whilst Foucault experienced persecution for his sexual orientation. Neither, however, resiled from action because of personally disturbing consequences, and I believe that such failure to engage is not an option for me either. Local researchers from my own University have argued
for the continued engagement with Māori by non-Māori, as the quotation below indicates.

Māori calls for self-determination are often misunderstood by non-Māori people. It is not a call for separatism or non-interference, nor is it a call for non-Māori people to stand back and leave Māori alone, in effect to relinquish all responsibility for the ongoing relationship between the peoples of New Zealand. Rather it is a call for all those involved in education in New Zealand to reposition themselves in relation to these emerging aspirations of Māori people for an autonomous voice (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy 2007: 8).

So, a first task for any educators, in whatever country we might be positioned, is to seek to know ourselves in order to ‘reposition’ ourselves. We need to understand and to articulate our own values, so that we might hold ourselves (and be held) to account for our behaviour. Is our behaviour virtuous? Is it compatible with our espoused values? How do we know that this is the case? What evidence can we seek in order to demonstrate that our espoused theory matches our theory-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1974)? And what are we doing to understand better the values of those with whom we work? If we don’t understand their values, and are not articulate about our own, then the possibility of transgression is much increased. These groups may be different ethnically, or in terms of beliefs or behaviours, and caution is required in any such work with ‘others’ than ourselves.

When we are operating in cross-cultural contexts, the very least we can do is to ensure that we work alongside – and perhaps are mentored by – someone who is born into the cultures represented in those contexts. Even then, as was evident in my case at TWoA, it is still possible to get things wrong, inadvertently to cause harm when our intentions are the opposite. However, lest this chapter appear one-sided, I have had successes when working in cross-cultural contexts. The photograph below in Figure 2.1 illustrates a research situation where I was working in a bicultural team, alongside a Māori colleague whose knowledge of appropriate protocols such as how to enter a Māori environment sensitively and to provide feedback in ways that made sense to the respondents, no doubt saved me from inadvertent damage to the participants or to the project.

Andrea’s advice to both Eileen and me, as we put the project funding application in, steered the proposal through Unitec’s ethics committee, sought entry to, carried out and then disseminated the results of the research to schools and the Ministry of Education, was absolutely invaluable and I learned a lot from working with her. That particular project sought to distil the learning from a Ministry-funded initiative in order to ensure that teachers of Māori students in mainstream classes were exposed to pedagogical approaches that better supported their students’ learning, and maximised their chances
of educational success. It was a project close to all our hearts, and another demonstration of how our values permeate our practice. There is still no guarantee of safe practice, however. In the TWoA situation, I was working closely with, supported by and accountable to Māori staff and managers, and still found myself charged with unsafe practice.

Lessons learned?
This chapter is about our ability to articulate our values, to show how we work these out in our practice, and how we are accountable to ourselves and others for that practice. Would I, with the benefit of hindsight, have encouraged TWoA to enter the PBRF again? Perhaps some guidelines could be helpful here.

1. Engagement in educational practice with groups that differ from one’s own should require us to ensure that we are, as far as possible when we come from a different background, cognisant of the values of those groups. I thought I was sufficiently cognisant of the values of TWoA; to some extent I was, but the caution of the other two wānanga around participation perhaps showed that there were aspects of the scheme that a more thoroughly informed Research Manager might have anticipated.

2. Initiatives that are going to require a major step that will affect the future direction of an institution may more safely be undertaken by
those who are fully immersed in the environment, rather than by those who may be construed as ‘outsiders’.

3. Notwithstanding the above, if we are beneficiaries of social systems (such as in education), we owe it to those not so benefited by those systems to work for their inclusion. This entails risk, as the situation I described in this chapter revealed, but to fail to engage in this kind of work is to continue the injustice. This is, therefore a paradox that may not easily be resolvable (see Whitehead 1993).

4. If it transpires that we have erred, however ‘pure’ our motives, we need to acknowledge the situation and work to ensure that we do not repeat the error in similar contexts in the future.

So yes, I probably still would have opted to support TWoA’s participation in the PBRF. I believe that this action resulted in issues being brought to the fore that would not have seen the light of day had our Wānanga not chosen to participate. They are issues of colonialism; of the imposition of values that were at variance with many Māori ways of being and doing; of the continuance of practices and funding mechanisms that have disadvantaged Māori over many decades. That our government is now looking at alternative funding mechanisms which operate in more equitable and appropriate ways is an indication that good has come out of the situation. There may not be a direct causative effect – government may have developed more appropriate funding mechanisms without the wānangas’ participation (or otherwise) in the PBRF, and the resultant research that has shown the problems of aspects of the scheme – but at the time we felt we had to take action to prevent further funding disparity. As the quotation (attributed to Edward Burke) goes, ‘In order for evil to triumph, it is necessary only that good men do nothing’. Those of us working at TWoA at the time saw the abatement of research funding if we did not participate as ‘evil’ and felt it important to show that Māori were just as capable of producing great research as anybody else. Ultimately, TWoA continues to receive government research funding that would not have been provided had we not participated. But were the costs too high? Was the trade-off of values of whakaiti and the acceptance that a degree of whakahihi would be needed appropriate? Only time will tell.

I wish to conclude this chapter with the words that concluded my paper at York St John University in 2012 (see Bruce Ferguson, 2012: 8).

If we, as educators, are to hold ourselves accountable for our values as articulated in our speech and lives, we will not necessarily have peaceful, safe lives. In our attempts to live out our practice and to be ‘virtuous educators’, we may give offence, cause dissension or expose ourselves to abuse even when our best intention is to rectify injustice. But if we exercise constraint in our practice in order to protect ourselves from these possibilities, we run the risk
of perpetuating structural privilege; of operating hypocritically when we know we should do better; of preaching messages of social change that we are not prepared to practise ourselves. It may be dangerous, but can we ethically do otherwise?

Notes:

2. A wānanga is a Māori tertiary learning institution

References


Chapter 3

Action research in Iceland
Glimpses and reflections

Hafþór Guðjónsson

This is a personal account. I am looking back, reflecting on my experiences of the development and progress of action research in Iceland. I was one of a handful of people who brought action research to Iceland, or rather, ‘re-imported’ it because John Elliott had already visited Iceland in the early 1980s, invited by the Teachers College, with news for teachers and teacher educators in Iceland about this thing called action research. However, the idea didn’t appear to have much momentum at that time. This time, however, it has. Indeed, action research appears to be gaining ground in Iceland to a considerable extent and this has happened on two fronts: at the School of Education, University of Iceland, and in the general schools, from kindergarten to upper-secondary schools.

Action research at the University of Iceland

Only a few years back, action research was not on course programmes published by the University of Iceland. Now it is presented as a major form of research together with quantitative research and qualitative research. This has happened within the School of Education where we have seen a growing number of students at our action research courses and also a growing number of students (including experienced teachers returning to the University for a masters degree) who choose action research as the methodology for doing their masters degrees. Not surprisingly, this has given rise to publications. Only a decade ago one could hardly find an Icelandic paper on action research. Now, at the end of 2012, we can proudly point to approximately sixty papers and masters theses written in Icelandic and most of them published within the last five years; this represents a substantial number given the small size of our country (a population of approximately 350,000). This writing activity is of key importance for anyone involved in such dissemination because it makes possible the development of an Icelandic discourse linked to action research. Gradually, therefore, Icelanders involved in action research are becoming more accustomed to speaking and writing about action research in their mother tongue.
Action research in Icelandic schools

On the other front we are witnessing more and more teachers doing action research in schools. How many schools or how many teachers we do not know. What we do know is that teachers across all school sectors are involved, from kindergarten to upper-primary schools. The first school to begin action research was an upper-secondary school, Sund College, or Menntaskólinn við Sund as we call it, in autumn 2005. I was lucky to be involved from the very start (as an adviser) and have been working with a group of teachers in this school ever since, meeting with them on a regular basis (approximately once a month) during the school year. This was not coincidence. The school had been involved in a self-evaluation programme and wanted to take it further so they contacted me to see if I was willing to act as an adviser for a group of teachers who wished to explore their own practices. I was quick to say ‘yes’ because I saw this as an opportunity to realise a dream. A few years previously, I had finished a doctoral study at the University of British Columbia. That study was a self-study, an exploration into my own practices as a teacher educator at the University of Iceland and chemistry teacher at the Sund College (Gudjonsson 2002, 2007). So in becoming an adviser for teachers in the College I was in fact returning to my old school where I had been teaching chemistry for almost two decades, as well as concurrently teaching prospective science teachers at the University of Iceland (in the latter half of that period). In retrospect I therefore feel justified in saying, ‘This is how it all began’, where ‘all’ refers to action research in Icelandic schools in recent years.

The idea of doing action research was quick to spread. Soon some other upper-secondary schools followed suit and, more recently, primary schools and kindergarten schools have become involved. Also influential in this regard, it seems, was the establishment of the Icelandic Action Research Association, in April 2008. We held an inaugural conference called ‘Breaking the isolation of teachers’. Approximately 130 teachers attended this conference where they listened to other teachers speaking about their experiences of doing action research in their respective schools and to the keynote speaker, Jean McNiff, who talked about her perceptions of the significance of action research for professional development. Since then, Jean has become one of us, revisiting Iceland several times and encouraging and supporting our efforts to develop and disseminate action research in Iceland. In 2011 she came in a new role, as an external examiner for a doctoral study, the first action research doctoral study completed in Iceland and the first doctoral study within the School of Education, University of Iceland. The doctorate was that of a primary school teacher, Karen Rut Gísladóttir, who had been teaching Icelandic to deaf students for several years while simultaneously exploring her teaching practices (Gísladóttir 2011). This was, I think, an important turning point because now
people (including the sceptics) could see that action research was relevant for all levels of study.

**Empowerment**

There is no doubt that action research has been gaining ground in Iceland. Given the context of this book, I think this is good news and I intend now to explain why this is the case by highlighting particular moments and people in the story outlined broadly above. As already indicated, I have been involved in this story on both fronts identified, that is, teaching action research courses and supervising masters and doctoral students at the university, and supporting groups of teachers doing action research in schools. These experiences have shown me that doing action research may be of great benefit to teachers and student teachers. In particular, it empowers them. When I think of my experiences to do with action research, individuals and groups and events begin to flash before my eyes, all pointing to this word – empowerment.

I would like to explore this issue in some detail. Let me emphasise that for me this idea of empowerment has many links and dimensions, including respect, connectedness, visions, values, learning, power and knowledge. In other words, one may become empowered in so many ways and through so many channels. Action research, I believe, may provide such ways and channels. That is what makes it is so valuable for me. One of my graduate students made me aware of this issue. Her name is Edda Kjartansdóttir. Following Icelandic tradition, I call her by her first name.

**Edda**

Edda participated in the conference mentioned above when the Icelandic Action Research Association was born. Reflecting on this event in her master’s thesis, she wrote:

> In spring 2008, I attended the first meeting of the Icelandic Action Research Association. Listening to the lectures, I experienced something that attracted me strongly. I felt that this was how I would like to work. Returning home from that meeting an idea began to grow in my mind, namely that action research might be an ideal means for empowering teachers. The enthusiasm that took hold of me during that meeting has become a kind of driving force for me towards my goal. I intend to use action research when doing developmental work with teachers. (Kjartansdóttir 2010: 12)

Edda, I should say, taught in primary schools for many years. Towards the end of this part of her career (she now works at the university as a coordinator for continuing education) a feeling that something was wrong in schools began to take hold in her mind:
The best way to describe that feeling is to say that I felt as if teachers were somehow losing their power; they seemed constantly to be complaining about their jobs and their situation. My dreams for them were that they should be strong, enthusiastic, passionate and professional workers. Through doing this research, I am hoping to be able to articulate those feelings... (Kjartansdóttir 2010: 7)

I supervised Edda for her master’s thesis. When she began this work, she was anxious because she felt that she might not be able to articulate the feelings she writes of above if forced to use conventional academic forms of writing. Using these conventional forms, she told me, brought on a feeling of suffocation. Are there any alternatives? she asked me. Yes, there are, I replied and gave her a paper written by Laurel Richardson (1994), entitled ‘Writing: A method of inquiry’. In that paper, Richardson argues that conventional academic models of writing often serve to suppress creative writing. Writing, Richardson adds, need not be thought of as a process of ‘writing up research’ (a common view in the academy, it seems) but may also be thought of as a method of inquiry in itself and as a way of learning and developing one’s voice.

Giving this paper to Edda was like throwing her a life buoy. From now on, she was writing with power and enthusiasm; and this was so because now she was free to articulate her feelings, her meanings, and her growing understanding in a form that suited her, namely story. In the end, that story became a significant part of her thesis, indeed the core part. As mentioned above she was addressing the situation of primary school teachers in Iceland, trying to come to grips with a long-felt feeling that they had been ‘losing power’ over the years. Exploring the research literature, she found that she was not alone in feeling this way. Many scholars, including people like Fullan, Hargreaves, Sergiovanni and Kincheloe, were articulating similar views and, no doubt, they helped her come to a deeper understanding of this issue.

However, she was not satisfied just referring to these authors. She wanted to let her voice come through the text in a manner that might engage other people, teachers in particular. After all, it was her dream to help them become stronger and it might not be a good idea to start with a traditional academic text because most teachers, she contends, do not like such texts. Therefore, she decided to write a story and she did this with enthusiasm and joy because she is an eminent storyteller and because she finds this way of articulating her feelings and her beliefs very useful. No doubt, she has captured people’s attention and, one may say, caused considerable disturbance. In part, this is because good stories tend to do exactly this. They capture and they disturb.

However, it needs to be kept in mind that Edda was breaking the rules of our academy by using story as a form of representation. Indeed, our academy appears to be rather conservative when it comes to forms of representation
and grammar, even requiring students not to use the pronoun ‘I’ when writing their theses. The general attitude, it seems to me, is that in order to be seen as a scientific or authentic researcher you should see to it that your thesis is free of your fingerprints, your voice. In our efforts to establish action research at the School of Education, University of Iceland, my colleagues and I have fought against this outmoded convention, arguing that the voice of the student teacher is a key issue in teacher education. Becoming a teacher involves coming to know who you are as teacher. Working with young people in schools, you need to be aware of your values and beliefs. Otherwise, you may easily get bewildered, given that this is a complex endeavour. Indeed, one may well think of teacher education as an opportunity to develop one’s identity as a teacher and this includes developing one’s voice and deciding what kind of stories one is going to live by as a teacher. Therefore, and contrary to convention, my colleagues and I argue that ‘I’s’ should be prominent in masters theses in teacher education programs.

Humans, Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) contend, are ‘storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, live storied lives’. I agree. People tend to make sense of their experiences through stories. Edda knows this and this insight was, I think, part of the reason why she felt so relieved when told that using a story form in her thesis was acceptable. At this point she began to believe that she might reach people, and, apparently, she did. There have been so many positive responses to her thesis, not least from teachers.

Having completed her thesis Edda wrote a paper (in Icelandic) titled (in translation) ‘Action research as an empowering tool’. I brought that paper immediately to the attention of the participants (mostly teachers) in an action research course I was teaching at the University of Iceland. Their responses were both strong and positive. Here are two examples:

I feel that people too often forget that teachers are experts and that parents should trust them to work with their children in a way the teachers feel appropriate. Action research must be good for all teachers and teaching so now please go ahead and spread the word! (Sigrún, a kindergarten teacher, 12 February 2011)

The article spoke to me in many different ways. The key idea I think is that doing action research and reflecting on their work may enable teachers to deepen their understanding of and their attitude toward their work. This might be a way for teachers to gain more power over their work. Feeling that they are in control is very important. (Kristín, a music teacher, 4 February 2011)

Other responses were similar. Generally, the teachers in this course responded to Edda’s paper with interest and enthusiasm, indicating that the time was ripe for teachers in Iceland to rise up and gain more control of their own work.
Elva

I now tell the story of Elva, a kindergarten school teacher. As indicated above, teachers in primary and secondary schools in Iceland have been controlled from above through a prescriptive and detailed state curriculum. Kindergarten teachers are in a different position. They are not under the same pressures of a prescriptive state curriculum. Rather, they are guided by general pedagogical principles, which they themselves have helped create. In the last few decades the kindergarten has been transformed from being a place to keep children under surveillance to becoming a school of its own, an acknowledged part of the public school system in Iceland. Along with this development, kindergarten teachers have constructed their own curricular guidelines and this has taken place through intense dialogue over the years with the result that today kindergarten teachers are, compared to other teachers in Iceland, more aware of their beliefs and in a better position to act in accordance with those beliefs. This, I think, empowers them, and gives them the pride and courage to get on with and continually develop their work. Therefore, learning on the spot and studying their own practice may be more ‘natural’ for kindergarten teachers than teachers in other Icelandic school sectors. They have more freedom to act and inquire into their own practices because they are not burdened by a detailed state curriculum. They are still pedagogues rather than technicians. Please note my emphasis on the word ‘still’. Currently, kindergarten teachers in Iceland feel pressure from above and even from parents to make kindergartens more ‘school-like’; that is, kindergarten teachers should put less emphasis on play and more emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy, teach children how to read and write and do some basic maths. Many kindergarten teachers find this threatening because they think of play as something very valuable for children, an activity that helps them develop their thinking and their imagination. However, this is not how the cultural model depicts it. Common perceptions are that play is play, something very ordinary that children do for amusement; and this may make it difficult for kindergarten teachers to defend play as a key learning activity.

I feel justified in speaking the way I do about kindergarten teachers because I worked with one of them for some time, a woman named Elva Önundardóttir who has recently finished her masters thesis, a study focusing on children’s play with so-called ‘unit blocks’, i.e. specially designed wooden blocks that may be assembled in various ways for constructional purposes. That study was a collaborative action research project. Elva decided to do action research with her colleagues in the kindergarten where she was working, and I was fortunate to supervise her. In the process I learned a great deal about play as well as what it means to be a kindergarten teacher. I have also come to understand better how important action research may be for kindergarten teachers in Iceland.
in the process of developing their ideas and values and, and in particular, their thinking about play.

Throughout this study, Elva’s aim was to explore how the children used unit blocks to make sense of field trips they undertook to various places outside school, including a fire station, a churchyard and an animal hospital. Returning from such excursions, the children were keen to act out their experiences in play, using available resources, unit blocks in particular. As usual, Elva and the other teachers accompanied them on their trips but this time with somewhat different intentions because now they were acting both as teachers and also as researchers. This is evident in the master’s thesis that grew out of this collaborative endeavour. Turning over the pages one sees pictures of children building fire stations, churchyards and animal hospitals as well as vignettes written by the teachers and describing those activities and dialogues that emerged in connection with those activities. As expected, the teachers who took part in this study felt that they had learned a lot. Towards the end of her thesis, Elva writes:

This action research project has contributed to strengthening the professionalism of the community of teachers in my kindergarten, a community where respect, interest and professional aspiration flourish. Participating in the research has been a profound learning experience for the teachers … The teachers have become stronger and more confident in their work with the children, in particular when it comes to their style of questioning (open questions) and discussions. (Önundardóttir 2011: 112)

In my view, Elva has become empowered through her study, i.e. stronger in her views, more competent in articulating her values and defending what children like most and what they (in my view) learn most from, namely play. Besides, the study helped empower other teachers in the kindergarten where the study was undertaken because this was a collaborative effort: everybody was involved, for example by taking field notes while observing children at play and sharing their experiences during regular meetings that were integral to the research program.

Halla

As mentioned, the current action research movement in Iceland began in one particular school, a secondary school, the Sund College, or Menntaskólinn við Sund, where I have been acting as an adviser for a group of teachers inquiring into their practices. Halla Kjartansdóttir is one of the teachers in that group. Indeed, she has been quite active as a teacher researcher over the years. Reflecting on her experiences during a lecture at the Sund College and wondering about the usefulness of action research for practitioners like herself she made the following points. Action research, she said,
makes the work the teacher does more visible
provides the teacher with an opportunity to develop better practices in a systematic way
encourages the teacher to care more deeply about their work
provides the teacher with new perspectives on their teaching and helps them to avoid teaching in an automatic manner
brings the teacher closer to their students

When presenting action research to Icelandic teachers, I have often referred to these points from Halla. I do so because I find them to be true. They harmonize with my own experiences as a teacher researcher. Besides, listening to teachers who have embarked on action research, I often hear people say similar things. In particular, teacher researchers often mention this feeling of ‘coming closer to the students’ by doing action research. It appears that when teachers embark on action research they often experience a change in their relationship with their students. In my view, this is a very important observation that may help us understand better the value of action research in schools. Being a teacher implies taking on a certain role, which in turn means following a cultural script (Cole 1996) that tells the teacher how to act in the place called a classroom (Bruner 1996). Adopting this role implies seeing children in the classroom as recipients and carriers of ‘given’ or established knowledge. Following Mercer (2000), much of what is called ‘teaching’ in schools tends to go under the banner of ‘IRE’, where ‘I’ stands for initiation, ‘R’ for response and ‘E’ for evaluation. That is, the teacher begins by asking questions related to the established knowledge (I), the students respond to those questions (R) and the teacher evaluates their answers, judging them either right or wrong (E). Stepping out of this role or similar ‘teacher roles’ may not be easy because if the teacher does so they may feel that they are not teaching; the children may also become anxious through feeling that they are not being taught. Indeed, anxieties of this sort are something teachers and student teachers often bring up when discussing reforms or changes in teaching. Cultural scripts are not easy to overcome, it seems.

Taking on the role of the researcher may enable the teacher to make a space for another type of teaching behaviour, call it a form of inquiry. Here a new set of questions tend to arise in the mind of the teacher (now also acting as teacher researcher); questions such as ‘who are they?’, ‘what do they know?’, ‘how do they learn?’, and ‘how do they think?’. In each case, the term ‘they’ points to the students involved who then tend to become less recipients of established knowledge and more children or people capable of thinking and creating meanings and ideas (Bruner 1996). Repeatedly I have heard teachers tell stories about their action research activities and speaking about this sort of change of attitude and behaviour when they take on the role of researcher; and this
new kind of attitudes and behaviour tend to improve their relationships with their students, it seems. As a rule, students respond positively when the teacher approaches them in an inquiry mode, asking them, say, about their views. This should not come as a surprise. Asked this way the students feel honoured: The teacher wants my opinion! She bothers to ask what I think! She appears to value my views! Moreover, such responses may be strengthened and sustained when the students realise that the teacher is doing these things in order to serve them: improve the teacher’s teaching so that they may learn better. For many, good teaching connects closely to dialogue and mutual respect. Doing action research in the classroom, I argue, may very well increase the likelihood of dialogue and nurture mutual respect and thus, by its very existence, help improve the quality of teaching and learning; that is, help develop the classroom as a genuine learning community because now the teacher has also become a learner. This is the main reason for my interest in bringing action research to schools: I see it as a process that may help us change the culture of schools, enabling us to develop new and more democratic forms of life in the classroom.

The living ‘I’ at the centre of inquiry

Action research, we know, may take various forms. In Iceland, it has developed within schools and the School of Education, University of Iceland, practised mostly by teachers and student teachers. It has been significantly imbued with the idea of self-reflection and this points to the influence of Jean McNiff who sees the idea of self-reflection as central (McNiff 2007, 2010). Indeed, this emphasis on self-reflection may help explain why action research has been gaining momentum in Iceland in recent times. In Iceland, people tend to think of research in positivistic terms. Research, most people have come to think, requires an externalist positioning. Researchers study other people’s lives. Now people have learnt that research may also be spoken of as adopting an internalist positioning; that researchers may, at least in some cases, turn their gaze inward to focus on personal values and beliefs. Moreover, it is likely that it is precisely this idea that has given strength to the current emphasis on action research in Iceland. Now, many teachers and student teachers are beginning to understand that exploring one’s values and beliefs may be a worthwhile and productive endeavour. After all, how we act depends on our beliefs and values. However, we are not always aware of our beliefs and values. They tend to be hidden from view, especially when not under scrutiny, which is frequently the case for teachers who are busy doing things but not as busy reflecting on their thinking. Doing my self-study dissertation a decade ago, I realised this in me. Being confronted with Dewey’s and Schön’s ideas about reflection I began, for the first time in my life, seriously to attend to my own views, wondering how I was thinking and, with Bruner’s (1996) help, wondering how my culture had been
shaping my beliefs and values. In other words, now I was able to see myself as a child of my own culture and, for the same reason, able to see that the world I had been constructing for myself was not the only one possible. In particular, I began to understand that learning might be conceived of differently from what my culture had led me to believe. In retrospect, this powerful experience deeply changed my way of being and thinking and, in particular, how I work as a teacher and teacher educator. For example, dialogue is now at the centre of my teaching. Understandably, therefore, I tend to emphasize the idea of self-reflection when introducing action research to people in Iceland. In light of these experiences, I found it very interesting to read McNiff’s (2007) paper ‘Action research for cultural renewal’, in which she speaks of this issue as a new kind of scholarship:

The new scholarship is different from traditional forms of scholarship in that it locates itself in the real world and places the living ‘I’ in company with other living ‘I’s’, at the centre of the enquiry (p. 2).

Linking these words to my own experiences outlined above I sense their truthfulness. Indeed, looking back on the current history of action research in Iceland and the enthusiasm and hopes associated with it I feel tempted to think that what gives it power is this new thinking, this idea of ‘placing the living “I”, in company with other living “I’s” at the centre of inquiry’, as McNiff puts it. This is such a powerful idea, I think, because it touches the roots of our cultural imprints and makes us wonder who we are and how strong we may become when given appropriate conditions.

Action research has been gaining ground in Iceland in the last decade. It has become a respected form of research within the academy and we have seen a growing number of teachers doing action research in schools. Whether this development will continue only the future knows. We have seen ups and downs in action research worldwide. I firmly believe that the idea of practitioners inquiring into their own work is gaining momentum within the Icelandic educational community. Saying this I keep in mind the fact already mentioned above that we have been witnessing, for the first time in our history, a build-up of a considerable action research literature in our own language. This implies that we Icelanders are learning to speak of action research in our own language and, by the same token, learning to speak of research in new ways. This makes me optimistic for the future of action research in Iceland.

References


Chapter 4

Developing virtuous leaders

An action research approach to improving school leadership in a South African context

Lesley Wood, with Bruce Damons

Introduction

Successful schools are led by successful leaders, according to Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007), and the most prevalent shortcoming in failing schools appears to be weak leadership (Taylor and Ryan 2005). The literature on school leadership (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr 2010; Piggot-Irvine 2011) consistently relates good school results to transformative school leadership. It seems, therefore, that school leaders are key to school improvement. However, in South Africa, few principals have been exposed to the kind of learning that would enable them to lead in a transformative way, since autocratic and hierarchical methods of management have until recently been the norm in most schools.

As a tertiary researcher committed to social transformation, I have conducted several action research projects with school principals and leaders. I was interested in exploring whether a values-based action research approach would help school leaders to lead in a transformative manner that would impact positively on the school environment. This chapter is based on a case study of the experiences of one school principal I have been privileged to work with in two action research projects. Having read his reflective writings and project reports, I was convinced that his learning about his own leadership contained valuable lessons for other school principals and leaders. However, he said that he did not have the time to write it up and suggested that I used the data gathered in the course of the projects to construct a case study. The aim of this chapter therefore is to explain how the process of collaboratively articulating and embodying specific values for a school, coupled with a systematic process of critical reflection and action, can facilitate epistemological and ontological shifts which can lead to the adoption of a more ‘virtuous’ leadership practice. The chapter thus provides evidence of the transformative potential of action research for school leadership. By living out benevolent values that promote the wellbeing and quality of life of people, leaders can become an effective...
Developing virtuous leaders

A catalyst for positive change within their sphere of influence. The values they encourage the school community to articulate and embody then become standards against which the quality of future educational practices can be gauged, thereby promoting sustained change.

Context

Under apartheid, non-white schools lacked the basic requirements for good schooling, such as well-qualified educators and adequate school equipment and infrastructure (Fiske and Ladd 2005); the teaching practices and management styles were autocratic, and curricula were ‘racist and sexist’ (Perumal 2009: 36). Since the objective of education was to cement the philosophy of apartheid and encourage blind acceptance of the authority that enforced it (Fiske and Ladd 2005), critical thinking by teachers and learners was frowned on. Historical continuity (Heikkinen, Huttunen and Syrjälä 2007) wields a major influence on current contexts, so the remaining legacies of that era endure, including weak leadership, the destruction of the ethos of teaching and learning and the failure of education in former non-white schools (November, Alexander and Van Wyk 2010).

The primary school in which Bruce is principal provides an example. The school serves several communities, where up to 90% of parents are unemployed. Poverty and its resultant social problems are the norm. The communities have been severely affected by HIV and AIDS, crime and abuse is rampant, housing and basic municipal services like water and electricity are inadequate or non-existent. These social challenges impact negatively on the academic challenges facing the school, which include a lack of infrastructure and too few teachers for the growing enrolment of more than 1000 learners, many of whom are hungry, abused and/or neglected. This scenario is typical of the majority of former non-white schools and is the reason that our Minister of Basic Education stated, ‘We should not mislead ourselves and say the whole [education] system is in crisis … It is the education of an African child that is in crisis’ (Motshekga 2010: 1).

An excerpt from Bruce’s diary (February 2009) illustrates the kind of challenges facing school leaders:

Baby Love 1 (BL1) is a 12 year old girl in grade 5. I was visited by the police and informed that they received an anonymous tip that her biological father had attempted to rape her. After an interview, which I was part of, it transpired that every weekend when the father was under the influence of alcohol, he attempts to rape her. The scary part is that I suspect that the father might be HIV+ because the mother had reported her + status earlier to me. The deadpan way in which BL1 described her ordeal made me bleed because here was a child that is dying inside. As a father of a 15 year old daughter I felt ashamed. What father would want to do this to his own child? A positive reflection, if there can
be any, was that BL1 felt safe enough to open up about her ordeal and that she wanted me to be present during the interview with the police.

It is evident that BL1 trusted her principal and believed he would help her. This example (and he gives another four, which are equally heartrending) emphasises the important role that school plays in the lives of these children – it is often the only safe place they can access and therefore school leadership has a moral imperative to provide support and care so that the child can learn and develop. Yet, in spite of these disadvantageous circumstances, the school, under Bruce’s leadership, has flourished. He has won various awards for his leadership, including Principal of the Year, indicating that he is recognised as an effective school leader. His school is also viewed as a model community school by the local university, Department of Basic Education and other education partners. This poses the question of why he has been able to rise above the circumstances and influence the school towards positive change, when others have not. I believe that the identification and articulation of explicit values, accompanied by continual critical self-reflection, has played a major role in the flourishing of the school under his leadership.

**Values, virtues and action research**

Values refer to the ideas we hold about what we believe to be good and right. Values guide the decisions we make in our personal and professional lives and are described by some as positive character aspects (e.g. Lombardo 2008) which, when embodied in everyday practice, become virtues, or effective forces that bring about change for the social good. Of course, this implies that we have to adopt values that will lead to an improvement in the quality of life of ourselves and others, such as those necessary for the attainment of social justice. However, values remain abstract unless we make a conscious decision to live them out. In this chapter I argue that, if school leaders choose to base their practices on values that are aimed at making the world a better place for all, their behaviour and practice will become more virtuous. This ideal is not easy to achieve, unless there is commitment to continual critical self-reflection and the will to change.

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) show the link between values, thinking and resultant behaviour. To become virtuous leaders who can influence others towards positive change, school leaders should be able to define and operationalise their values as living standards (Whitehead 1989) against which their leadership can be judged. Yet the development of moral leadership has been ignored in many school leader training programmes (Growe 1999). The question is how school leaders transform abstract ideas of values into acts that exemplify these as virtues. Action research seems to provide an answer.
There can be little change without learning; and learning implies at least personal change. Action research involves both learning and change. The research provides the learning. The action provides the change. In action research the two function together as a dialectic: action~research. (Dick, 2005: 137)

I am thus proposing that a systematic process of reflection on values, taking action to live out these values, and then evaluating action against them, will contribute to a virtuous form of leadership that will be able to help school communities to address the social injustices they face and to provide a quality education for all.

Data generation and analysis

Wilson (2008) explains how ideas around what constitutes scholarly research and what knowledge is valuable are moving away from traditional approaches, to embrace the emergence of knowledge through reciprocal relationships between researchers and other people, places and ideas. During the course of our collaboration on action research projects, Bruce shared his written and oral reflections with me and we had many conversations within the action research groups. I visited his school and worked with some of his teachers in another action research project; this provided me with further insights into his leadership. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define Narrative Inquiry as a method of using interviews, life experiences, notes, work samples, diaries and photographs as qualitative evidence, from which to draw understandings about practice and meaning-making. Bruce’s reflection on his experiences, together with my experiences of observing his leadership and his school culture, provided rich data to help me generate knowledge about the influence of values on school leadership. I analysed this data, filtered by my experiences and thinking, to determine the role that values played in improving his leadership and the general functioning of the school. To increase narrative trustworthiness, we agreed that I would write up the first draft of the chapter for Bruce to check and edit.

This account is thus a mutual effort that allows collaboratively generated knowledge to emerge from our reciprocal relationship. This approach changed his ‘perception of experiences from dormant happenings to experiences of learning and reflection’ (Mounter 2012: 31). I believe the account has catalytic validity (Herr and Anderson 2005), as it explains how his involvement in the research processes changed his reality and understanding of leadership and school improvement, and how this impacted on those he worked with. It conveys his ‘system of knowledge – what we know and how we come to know it’ (McNiff and Whitehead 2009). I believe that the cycles of reflection are apparent that led to the generation of new knowledge, thus enhancing dialogic and process validity (Herr and Anderson 2005). Ultimately, readers must judge its rhetorical validity, its power to persuade in an educational rather than a colonising manner.
I consider the credibility and trustworthiness of the account to be enhanced through our mutual collaboration on the research projects; by our frequent sharing of ideas within various action learning sets; by making this report available in the public domain; and by presenting Bruce’s values as ‘living standards of judgement’ (Whitehead 1989: 49).

The story of becoming a virtuous leader

This section is comprised of excerpts from reflective writings and reports that Bruce wrote between 2009 and 2012, while he was involved in the two action research projects I was leading. I have attempted to put them together to compose a flowing account of his learning about leadership and the need to identify and strive to live out benevolent values. I also add pertinent comments, based on my interpretation of his learning, grounded in relevant literature.

At the start of the academic year in 2009, Bruce wrote:

I was inspired to write this because of the number of challenges, or, as Robin Sharma so eloquently puts it, opportunities to learn, that have characterised the start of the academic year at Sapphire Primary. What is unusual is that I suspect that these opportunities to learn have always being there but my need/urge to write about them and put them in perspective has never felt so strong... (reflective writing, February 2009).

This extract indicates his readiness to reflect critically on what has to be done to improve the quality of pastoral support and academic learning at his school. He has identified something that is preventing him from leading the school to success. Identification of a concern and acceptance of responsibility for doing something to improve it is a first step in action research (McNiff and Whitehead 2010).

I recognise that something ‘new’ needs to be done to try and break the cycle of what prevents us from delivering true quality public education to the most vulnerable members of society (reflective writing, February 2009).

This excerpt makes it clear that he is not just chasing improved academic results, but that his concerns are grounded in his value of compassion and his desire for social justice and equal opportunities for all. Although his performance as principal is judged primarily by the Department of Basic Education according to the pass rate of the school, the more important factor for him is that learning is severely compromised when children are traumatised, hungry, depressed and anxious, as are the majority of children at schools like his.

I would argue very strongly that the school should be creating a strong social environment in order for the imparting of learning skills to flourish (reflective writing, 2009).
Bruce was ready to accept responsibility for his role as leader of the school in addressing ‘the amazing opportunities these challenges present to make a meaningful difference not only in the lives of these children but in the broader communities that they come from’ (ibid.)

Serendipitously, colleagues at the university and I approached him around this time to involve his school in an action research project, aimed at helping school leaders to conduct a collaborative enquiry to address a specific problematic issue at their school. The aim was for them to learn how action research could help them to take action in an inclusive and democratic manner to improve the functioning of their school. Thus he was able to find a theoretical framework that would enable him to explore ways to improve his leadership in his pursuit of providing quality education. We researchers on the project team believed that school leaders should have a dream they are determined to realize, a dream that has to be shared and owned by all the stakeholders in the school.

The project thus aimed at helping school leaders to learn how to imagine and realise their dreams through adopting an action research approach. Action research is an experiential process that allows individuals to participate actively in bringing about positive change in matters that concern them (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). Participative action research requires a partnership between all stakeholders, ensuring that multiple viewpoints are included to contribute towards overcoming barriers to advancing education (McGarvey 2007). The real and sustainable benefit of action research, however, lies in the fact that it is based on the assumption that people hold themselves accountable to values they have identified as important to guide their practice. These values derive from notions of democracy, equality, participation and enhancement of the quality of life (Stringer 2007). Conversations with Bruce revealed that he works on the understanding that, if he is serious about transforming and improving education, he cannot continue only to pay lip service to such transformative values. He needs to find ways to embody these values in everyday practices, so that his actions will be transformational for himself and others in his sphere of influence.

The participants in this project from Bruce’s school (Deputy Principal and three Heads of Department) worked together with him and their school community to address the following questions (McNiff and Whitehead 2006): What is our concern? Why are concerned about it? How do we gather data to show what is happening? What can we do about it? How do we ensure that our conclusions are reasonably fair and accurate? How can we explain the potential significance of what we are doing? How should we modify our practice and ideas in light of our evaluation?

They did not work in isolation, since it has to be remembered that we are part of a system composed of multiple other ‘I’s’ and therefore need to
create a shared understanding in our quest for improvement and learning. This ontological commitment opens the way for the realization of shared values. Individuals can transform themselves by living out their values in their everyday interactions. The cumulative effect of individual transformation in turn will, hopefully, positively influence the culture of the whole school (Wood 2010).

Values played a strong role in the governance of Bruce’s school even before his introduction to action research. True to their vision of being a ‘catalyst for social and economic change’ (Project Report 2011) the Governing Body had declared the school a no-fee school in 2005. Their vision included the school being ‘used as a base to educate our learners and also provide the opportunity for development of parents and the community. This can be done if the school serves as a centre of educational and social transformation’ (Project Report 2011). However, for this to happen, values had to be transformed from rhetoric into reality. In spite of much success and accolades, Bruce and his team realised that there is always room for improvement. He said, prior to this project, ‘We had never actually thought of a research component in the school to tackle challenges. This kind of research allows for a deeper process of thinking and application to fix challenges.’ They thus engaged in a process of democratic and participatory problem identification, which yielded results that challenged Bruce to look at his perception of himself as a democratic leader. The staff voted to improve the extra mural activity programme at the school, which was not the issue that Bruce had been trying to influence them to address. However, in spite of his initial annoyance at being outvoted, he later noted:

... by giving up power, you allow others to take responsibility for change. As a leader you have to … allow people to experiment about change and how they can administer it. Action research allows for the ownership of programmes to be taken (interview, 2010).

The team began by articulating the values they felt were being denied by the fact that learners did not have an adequate sports and extra mural programme, as explained in Figure 4.1.

These values were derived from the ones that Bruce had identified to guide his leadership, and which he displayed on his office wall (Figure 4.2), to remind himself of how he wished to attain his dream. His values were thus embraced by the rest of his staff as a way of attaining the vision of the school.

The visual representation of his values in his office reflected his belief that ‘Good schools have strong values. Values in the school reflect the characters of the leaders’ (interview 2010). This statement indicates his understanding of the need for a leader to be a strong, positive influence through embodying values in his everyday practice. Since action research is ‘value laden’ (McNiff and Whitehead 2006: 23), it influences the practices of those involved, making them ‘value driven’ (p. 128). The process of action research requires people to
negotiate which values will be foregrounded in their practices. By making values explicit, there is a standard against which each person can hold themselves accountable, and by which the general climate and functioning of the school may be evaluated.
Several actions were then undertaken by all the staff to improve the provision of extra-mural activities. Parents, community members and other outside partners were involved also – the local rugby club was approached to help with the coaching of the school teams; children who played soccer for outside clubs were appointed as coaches for their peers, assisted by boys from the local high school; mothers made strips for the teams and other volunteers patched up the netball court. In this way, through embodying their values of cooperation and diligence the situation was improved, allowing the other values to be reinforced through sport and other extra-mural activities, as reported in their evaluation:

Because they had to play together, they learnt to respect each other and to realize that although they are from different cultures and backgrounds, they need to work with each other to reach their goal and to give their very best for the team. Our values of loyalty to the team and school, cooperation, diligence and respect were being lived out as staff and children were engrossed in these activities (Project Report 2010).

Bruce’s leadership appeared to incorporate the factors that make action research programmes successful because he expected and encouraged participation from all his staff (Zuber-Skerritt 2011). Glasser (1984) argued that participation allows basic human needs to be satisfied, and through his adherence to the school’s values, Bruce was able to guide the project as a truly collaborative effort. He delegated leadership power to his project team and made sure that he recognised the value of everyone’s input through discussions at staff meetings. He visibly supported the different initiatives by staff and publicly recognised the achievements of the learners; he encouraged everyone to participate and enjoy what they were doing, by doing precisely that himself; he allowed the staff the freedom to choose what they wanted to focus on, even if it clashed with his own ideas; and he managed to unite the staff, learners, parents and volunteers in a vision that allowed them to work collaboratively and effectively towards attaining their goals. In this way they took ownership of the project, while continual reflection on their progress allowed them to realise how everyone was benefiting from it, all important factors in the success of any innovation (Berg and Ostergren 1979 cited in Zuber-Skerritt 2011).

At the end of this project, Bruce was convinced that the identification and operationalisation of values was important for education to transform the lives of vulnerable children:

I am of the opinion that we need to clearly define what are the values that underpin our desire to educate, not only our learners, but broader society as well (interview 2011).
Developing virtuous leaders

This belief was further cemented by his interaction with other principals and education stakeholders in similar environments. He conceptualised what values he, as a leader, together with the school community and external stakeholders, needed to focus on in order to offer hope to children:

- We need to instil integrity, morale courage and social responsibility in our communities.
- Some children are faced with so many challenges that they will never see GOD, and we as educators will be the only face of GOD that our children will see. The face of love, hope, compassion, humility and unconditional faith.
- We need to develop... a new operating system, which forms the basis of our interaction in all spheres of life... based on the values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship (reflective writing 2011)

He also learnt that it was important to develop empathy with those he wanted to help, and that standard policies and practices would not be able to improve specific situations, unless they were adapted to local needs. This learning enabled him to become a more authentic leader, evidenced by the following question he posed:

‘How can you lead me if you can’t dance with me?’ This is a strong leadership question. If you cannot feel the pain of the people you will never be able get the ‘tune’ that will make sense to our baby loves and communities that are faced with these challenges (reflective writing 2011).

In January 2012, I had an opportunity to lead a project aimed at developing the capacity of tertiary researchers and post-graduate students to conduct community engagement projects, using a participatory action learning and action research approach (PALAR) (Zuber-Skerritt 2011). Bruce was enrolled as a masters student and participated with his supervisor and a member of his staff as one of the teams. The aim was to develop leadership for a participatory form of community engagement in a small group of researchers/students/community members, who could then cascade their learning to the wider communities in which they had influence.

At this point, Bruce had been appointed by the Department of Basic Education as acting principal of a brand new school, which was in the heart of an impoverished community. He had the vision to develop an authentic community school, working in close collaboration with the wider community to help them to improve their quality of life through education. His masters project thus explored how PALAR could be used to achieve this aim. Participation in this project had a profound effect on Bruce’s development as a leader. With the help of his colleague on the project, he structured the school
Bruce attributed the role that PALAR played in his success of setting up this school:

On a professional level the methodology [PALAR] has been extremely helpful. Having gone through the workshop has made me mindful of how I engage in my work because I now realize the nature of a community school does require committees and management teams to work according to the values and process of action research. Figure 4.3 is an example of a template completed by his colleagues and provides evidence of how they were using the values and principles of action research to shape a democratic, participatory and caring culture at the school.

What you did: Did presentation to the Staff on how the PALAR approach can assist the staff in their implementations of their ideas to their projects. I also explained how the project planning templates work and how they can assist the staff in their planning.

Reflection on attainment of outcomes: Good although short time to present. I did not go into detail as teachers are busy preparing for exams. It was received well by the staff and it was quickly adopted as an official approach of the school.

Feedback from participants: S Ti: 'I think it is going to make our job easy. I like the fact that it has action learning because this means I can learn from my past experiences to improve on my next cycle. The template is going to make our planning direct and focused. It will also save time as we are also teachers with many responsibilities.

Mr V 'I think the core values can serve as good guidance for the staff and I believe they should be included in the school’s code of conduct for the staff.'

What did you learn from the experience?

- Providing people with relevant examples so they make connections with the PALAR approach, which helps with humanizing the explanation process.

- Usefulness of template as a tool for recording and learning.

Figure 4.3: Cascading report template
Developing virtuous leaders

action learning and action research at its core because of the dynamic nature of such a school (reflection, September 2012).

The process was not without challenges, as he noted:

The one challenge with cascading to the community is to design the indigenous script, a language that people who cannot read or write are able to interpret, understand and implement. When one’s core business is running a multifaceted school it takes a lot of time and energy to sit down and slowly guide persons through the process. However once they grasp the principles of the methodology it is amazing how they are able to adapt it to suit their personal needs. The joy of having a ‘proposal’ on paper, for the first time in their lives, was a wonderful feeling to experience, in the two projects cascaded in the community.

By the end of the first phase of this project in December 2012, Bruce had reframed his concern and research questions to recognise that the social issues impacting on education were not only an issue at this school, but in education in general. He introduced the PALAR methodology to a network of school leaders he belongs to, explaining how it had helped him to set up the new school as a community school and empower the management with a strategic framework to ensure the school continues to function according to the foundational values of action research.

His notion of leadership had thus expanded from being a leader at two schools, to being a leader in the national education endeavour. He wrote a paper outlining his concerns, which incorporated the thinking of many of his mentors and colleagues, and shared this electronically to encourage debate among various people he considered to have influence in education and/or whom he had worked with over the years. He places heavy emphasis on the importance of values:

I recognise now that education can truly play... a leading role in bringing about meaningful change in our communities and... broader social change in our country. I think we should start by focusing on the social values that should govern us in ‘doing education’. … education is not a profession but a passion that should be governed by love. We have the amazing ability to use our instructional techniques to impact on the broader social challenges and because we are searching for the model to best suit our present needs, we should remain excited by the new approaches that we are busy exploring. The storm of education is therefore no longer a threat but rather an ideal opportunity to present and most importantly to explore the possibilities that the storm presents (circulated paper, 2012).

He concludes the paper with a ‘call to action’ which suggests that one way of ‘building a sound operating system’ is to involve parents, learners, educators and the broader community in identifying seven core values which they,
as a community, will strive to live out. He suggests that such values need to be integrated into ‘lessons to live by’ which are explicitly taught to all stakeholders of the school and that the curriculum needs to ensure that both the social and instructional aims of the school are addressed. In this way, discussions about values can be initiated, to break the current practice of educators and management being merely ‘conveyor belts of rules and procedures’.

By circulating this paper, Bruce has now influenced many other education stakeholders to consider how values could help make their leadership more ‘virtuous’, enabling them to better address the many social, economic and academic challenges facing education in our country. Through his ongoing community networks, he continues to advocate for ‘a PALAR approach’ to leadership, based on democratically negotiated values for the social good.

Concluding comments

It is evident from the above narrative that the identification and embodiment of values have played a decisive role in turning Bruce into a ‘virtuous’ leader, both in his own school and also on a wider community and national level. There is ample evidence in the public domain of how he is regarded as a successful and exemplary school leader, and this chapter has been my attempt to explain why he can rise above the educational challenges that tend to immobilise and demoralise so many school principals. This experience has convinced me of the transformative and energising power of a values-based action research approach to school leadership, as seen through the eyes of a practitioner researcher (McNiff and Whitehead 2006). Bruce’s story has significance for school leaders, both in a South African context and globally as we struggle to find ways to educate our youth to deal with growing ‘turbulence’ (Zuber-Skerritt 2012: 15) in our world. In a world characterised by environmental disasters, economic uncertainty, political instability, fatal pandemics, and the breakdown of traditional support systems such as family and religion, there is a deep need to educate people to live a life governed by values that promote the well-being of all. School leaders who practise a virtuous form of leadership, through the embodiment of such values, will help to attain this end.

References


68 Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research


Chapter 5

Bridging the gap between health care education and clinical practice through action research

Bente Norbye, Odd Edvardsen and Anne-Lise Thoresen

This paper aims to describe and explain our practices as three professional educators at the Department of Health and Care Sciences at the University of Tromsø, Norway. In the paper we hope to show how we ground our responsibility for the education of health professionals in North Norway in a solid research base. Our work has two related aims:

- to improve the quality of our supervision practices in order to strengthen healthcare education;
- to establish a view of education and research as integrated within our university context.

This is an innovative move for us, for while there is considerable rhetoric around the need to integrate research and education, in practice the two fields tend to be perceived as separate by the university, both in terms of the nature of the activities involved and in terms of the amount of funding allocated to each. Our work challenges these established perceptions, and in this paper we offer a rationale for what may be seen as such radical change processes.

Background and contexts of our work

In 2009, the University College in Tromsø and the University of Tromsø applied for permission to merge into one institution, as a national pilot, and reorganised with new faculties and new departments. Before the merger, colleagues in the newly created Faculty of Health Sciences and in the Department of Health and Care Sciences had been located in the university and the university college, and therefore had different identities, responsibilities and self-perceptions. Traditionally, research in our department has been restricted to only a few researchers working within specialized fields. Little or no research has been conducted in the field of health care education and educational practices.
We three all have considerable experience in the practice field. Odd and Bente have been involved in nursing education for more than twenty years, and Anne-Lise in the midwifery programme for fifteen years. However, research has not been a priority for us as professional educators, and we have until now tended to see research as the province of other researchers – their research – something distant from us because of our key focus on teaching and education. Added to this has been the generally low expectation that professional educators should develop capacity in research, with a lack of adequate funding to support any efforts in this regard.

However, a requirement in the newly formed departments in the faculty was to develop research groups and increase research capacity. We as a group broadened this view to see educational practice as a form of research in itself. This has been challenging and has required us to develop new perceptions of ourselves as both professional educators and researchers.

This new perspective of identifying and providing research outcomes has involved our own reconceptualization of our work, and a linking of what has been seen traditionally as two different cultures of education and research. In this paper we include two specific examples to show how we have done this, as well as explain the general issue that forms the overarching research project.

We now therefore ask ourselves, ‘What kind of research should we be involved in and who should it benefit?’ Health care education is closely linked to health care services and the quality of clients’ and patients’ services and standards of care. The Norwegian Curriculum Regulations for Nursing Programme (Ministry of Education for Nursing Programmes 2008) and Midwifery education (Ministry of Education and Research 2005) state that 50% of students’ studies shall include clinical placements. This means that as a core aspect of their curriculum each student will devote 50% of their study time to learning and conducting nursing and midwifery in different health care services; for example, midwife students will engage in practical work in different maternity wards in several hospitals and community based-practices across North Norway. For nursing students, it means immersion in different wards in a university hospital as well as in district medical centers, in home-based care and in nursing homes.

The task of establishing and forming a research group has given us time and space to open up discussions about the nature and purposes of what we are doing and the kind of knowledge most appropriate for the task. We believe in enhancing the quality of the students’ learning environment, especially through emphasizing the integration of different forms of professional knowledge, with implications for an integration of theoretical, personal and practical knowledge. You cannot learn the art of midwifery without participating in the delivery
of a baby with a real mother; you cannot be a nurse without learning how to support patients in their grief, or learn how you as a student can become a professional through integrating your different kinds of knowledge by learning to care in real life situations.

What kind of knowledge are we then seeking? Should our research be located in the ‘swampy lowlands’, as described by Schön (1983: 42), ‘where situations are confusing and interlinked and incapable of technical solutions’? Or should it also contribute an additional strand of theory-based knowledge to the ‘high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research based theory and technique’ (p. 42)? Doing research that aims to improve the clinical part of health education is not easy. It demands cooperation among health personnel from different parts of the health care service, the health care students and several of our colleagues at the university.

We therefore need insight into and understanding of how we can contribute to improving students’ learning in clinical health care services. The debate about whether theory and practice should be seen as contradictory or complementary is still live, and many voices emphasize the importance of learning in real life situations, including Schön (1983), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Molander (1993). A key aim of our research group in health education is therefore to develop our research focus so that we can contribute to strengthening relationships between the University and healthcare services, and integrate this collaboration into our research strategy.

This is where we develop our research process at two different levels. First as a research group we have to build capacity in practice-based research to be able to contribute to knowledge of the field, and second, thereby contribute a parallel strand to already established forms of research at the university. We are therefore developing an action research approach as described by Lewin (1946), Elliott (1991) and McNiff (2013), where we as practitioners work through a process of planning, taking action, evaluating and reconsidering, which then transforms into a bigger and never-ending spiral of new knowledge; this involves documenting every stage of our learning, our data collection and the processes we put in place to test the validity of our emergent knowledge claims. This kind of empirical documentation contributes to the development of a robust evidence base, to show whether we are achieving our aims as a practice-based research group.

We first outline the general research project that provides an overarching framework for our work.
Establishing a research group
This project has been running since 2010 and is in its third year, as follows:

**Year 1: 2010–2011**
We convened a group of eight people with a focus on educational research to discuss current health educational issues, as these are perceived internationally, nationally, and locally. At this point we began to develop a research strategy. We engaged in depth with critical nursing educational literatures that recommend change (e.g. Benner et al. 2010). Our strategy appears at: http://en.uit.no/ansatte/organisasjon/hjem?p_dimension_id=153521&p_menu=42374

**Year 2: 2011–2012**
We introduced ideas about action research as a form of practice-based research to the Faculty of Health Science through engaging external educational research expertise in the person of Jean McNiff. We conducted workshops and introduced the idea of action research through our own projects and action research plans.

**Year 3: 2012–2013**
To date we have discussed issues of ontology, epistemology, methodology and socio-political intent as we seek to understand and integrate this in our projects and develop new ideas and practices. We have begun to disseminate our ideas at conferences through our writings, and we focus on writing up our projects. We have developed a deeper understanding of methodological and epistemological issues, and engaged extensively with the literatures of healthcare and professional education.

We understand that the potential for improvement within the clinical field is closely linked with the need for dialogue and the development of relationships between education and clinical practice, and between content and learning outcomes.

Here we offer two examples of what we have achieved so far. The first shows how we are developing cooperative practices between nurses in different health care services and professional educators in our University Bachelor Programmes, with the aim of improving the clinical learning environment for our students.

**Project 1: Developing a focus on the clinical placements of nursing students: closing the theory-practice gap in nursing**
The aim of this project (involving Bente and Odd), as with all our work, is to help us find ways of improving our own supervision practices, and cooperating with nursing staff in the clinical setting to help them improve theirs.
Background

Clinical placements and the supervision of nursing students in the BA programme in nursing have been a priority in our curriculum. Contrary to national trends in Norway, our staff deliberately work in the clinical practice field, supervising nursing students collaboratively with ward nurses and nurses identified as mentors (albeit sometimes temporarily), in order to try to strengthen supervision practices. The university lecturers and nurses (some acting as nurse mentors) involved in the project are freed up for 20% of their time to focus on developing a research base for the professional education of students. This involves encouraging all to appreciate what is involved in the different practices of the other, thus integrating practical and theoretical knowledge of nursing and healthcare practices. It involves acknowledging the expertise of one another and learning from our interactions, and this relational perspective provides the conceptual base for the professional learning of the students. It also emphasizes the values base of our collaborative practices between university staff and nurses in practical settings. This includes a willingness to commit to mutual respect, to learning from one another by being open to the potentials for reciprocal influence, thus building trust between our different professions.

Methodology

We ran a pilot study from September 2011 to October 2012 and adopted an action research approach throughout. Our participants were three mentors and three lecturers, in three different practical settings: a hospital ward, a home-based nursing service and a nursing home. We gathered data from participants by means of interviews and surveys where we invited observations and responses to questions about whether involvement in the project might lead to improvement in supervision practices. We negotiated how these recommendations would be implemented and personnel in each clinical setting tried out possible solutions. We continued to gather data about outcomes in relation to what were perceived as improved practices.

Our data revealed that involvement in the pilot project has had significant outcomes. Students have learned to take the initiative to improve their own learning activities and are better prepared to enter the clinical field, and clinical staff and mentors are better prepared to accommodate students. Other benefits include the following: potential problems and areas of conflict are identified and resolved earlier; inexperienced nurses are better supported; relationships between students and nurse mentors are more easily established; collaborative practices are strengthened; critical awareness is raised about professional responsibilities and professional identity; a learning culture is developed for students; and evaluation practices are clarified and improved. Furthermore, the University hospital and the health care service in the municipality have learned
from the project to develop similar practices by improving their capacity as educational as well as medical and caring institutions. This project has established important precedents for better cooperation between the practical field and academia. Evidence for the above claims may be found in the Project Report (Edvardsen and Norbye 2012).

We tested the validity of our provisional findings by making our data and interim reports available to all stakeholders and inviting their critical responses to our oral and written presentations of the findings at seminars, which took the form of validation meetings. Especially we asked them to respond critically to whether we were realising our values of trusting and cooperative practices, engagement with learning, supporting the learning of others from a commitment to the exercise of reciprocal influence and dialogical practices. The responses from all took the form of oral feedback, in which they agreed with our perceptions, with minor disagreements regarding the authenticity of the democratic nature of the processes involved. These disagreements were discussed with colleagues and further procedures were agreed. All stakeholders agreed with our theorisation that our values came to act as the living criteria and standards we used to judge the quality of our practices (McNiff 2013).

So far our research shows that every field is able to solve their most pressing problems and build a learning strategy given the right support and resources. We also think that this model of cooperation between academia and the clinical field will be a useful way of meeting the increased demand for educating nurses in the future.

The pilot project has been followed by a more generalized model of student supervision at the University Hospital of North Norway based on the findings of our research. The main issue is a prioritization of time, especially in relation to freeing up 20% of the workload of personnel directly involved in supervision practices, as well as the need for collaborative practices between the university and hospital staff.

**Project 2: Strengthening the supervision practices of midwifery students**

This example has focused on the role of midwives supervising midwifery students in different maternity wards in Northern Norway. It also focuses on how knowledge about professional supervision practices in midwifery education is being developed at the University of Tromsø.

**Background to the project**

Anne-Lise was one of two midwifery educators who designed and participated as a researcher in the project, which was initiated in 2008, and continued
Bridging the gap through action research

through to 2012. It began as a pilot project and transformed into three subsequent projects, focusing on strengthening the supervision of midwives. Altogether sixty-five midwives, from hospitals and maternity wards throughout North Norway, have participated in these projects. The aims of the projects were to help midwives develop and refine their pedagogical practices in relation to midwifery students, and to promote powerful collaboration between university-based midwifery lecturers, practice-based midwives, and midwifery students.

To achieve the aims, the project adopted an action research approach. It was structured as a series of university-based meetings for midwives followed by working periods of supervision of midwifery students in a clinical practice setting. This initiative has now been incorporated into the more general process of developing a research focus at the University of Tromsø. The aim remains to encourage midwives in a practice setting to improve their capacity for mentoring midwifery students.

The midwifery education postgraduate programme at the University of Tromsø lasts for two years full time, and during this period midwifery students are in clinical studies for four periods of twelve weeks each, across the two years of their studies. Midwives working in clinical practice have a considerable responsibility for the supervision of midwifery students; yet the situation is somewhat complex in Norway, because there is no demand for or provision of formal mentoring or supervision education for midwives. In a number of meetings between midwives working in clinical practice and midwife educators at the university the discussion of strengthening supervisor competence was a recurrent theme. Additionally, some midwives did not necessarily see mentoring as a regular part of their practice, and therefore it was important to help them appreciate the reasons for developing mentoring practices.

Methodology

We chose to adopt an action research approach throughout, as mentioned earlier, because it is a strategy for developing and improving local knowledge in an education programme.

In this project participants engaged in a process of dialogue and collaboration. During the university-based meetings (see Figure 5.1) we put in place a range of strategies, including reflective teams, lectures and seminars, and reading groups, and used logs as a form of reflective writing to gather data about participants’ learning. To develop reflective skills, learning strategies were based on participants’ practice-based experience with supervision midwifery students in periods between university-based meetings.

The learning philosophy of the project was that learning and change occur primarily through action, interaction, dialogue and reflection. The link
between the participants’ learning process and action research was through reflective logs. By using reflective logs as one of the learning strategies it was possible to gain insight into and knowledge about participants’ learning processes and reflections in relation to the supervision of midwifery students. The participants were encouraged to write up a short reflective log related to each compulsory day’s attendance, in response to the questions (1) what have you learned? (2) How do you want to use this knowledge/experience when you supervise the student? Reflective logs were written by the midwives and had multiple functions:

- assist practitioners to develop reflective skills and practices;
- act as data during the project;
- become data after the project, thus contributing to an evidence base that would enable practitioners to ground their knowledge claims.

Inspired by Ricoeur’s (1976) criteria for significant data and his philosophy about textual analysing; and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) idea of ‘member checking’, the data consists of transcribed logs that were analysed and subjected to critical scrutiny for validation. Through this process of analysing data, ideas about supervision knowledge became important. Of particular importance were the ideas that the midwives put the student at the center of their attention: they developed greater awareness of their positioning as supervisors; and collaboration between university lectures and practising midwives was strengthened.

What have we learned and what have we achieved through engaging in our action research?

These two projects show different aspects of action research in collaboration between clinical health care services and the university in educating health professionals. It has been important to negotiate the way forward, and to discuss different commitments and positions in the projects since the participants come from different practices, i.e. educational practices and health care services. Both practices have different, but equally important positions in the projects. These democratic processes have been achieved by a commitment to the involvement
of people from different practices. The projects have also led to new educational practices where closer cooperation has been achieved between university and healthcare services.

Action research processes have also been conducted in the development of the research group. We all contribute with an understanding that we need to share our experiences through dialogue and to take action accordingly to develop new knowledge. This includes preparatory readings before our workshops to expand our knowledge. We have started to record discussions to be able to test the validity of our processes and to be able to evaluate our actions. Since we are expanding our educational practices into research-based practices, our actions are also connected to writing up and disseminating our projects. The learning processes that involve expressing embodied knowledge, both in dialogue in the research group as well as in writing, will be part of strengthening the authenticity of the research group and its work.

Significance of our research
We understand the potential significance of our research as lying in our capacity to explain how our values of collaborative working, power sharing and dialogue have helped us to improve our practices and thereby help our students and colleagues to do the same. We have explained how studying what we are doing has helped us to strengthen our relationships and our understanding of our practices. Further, we have developed a common language that helps us articulate to one another and to others the significance of what we are doing. We hope we have shown how we have tried to narrow the gap between educational and clinical practices in the university and in the practice setting.

We recognise that we have far to go. Continuing work includes trying to exercise our influence in the thinking of people in our department and in the wider institution. We appreciate that, like thousands of others, we are caught in the living debates referred to earlier about the kind of knowledge that is legitimated as contributing to valid theory and the systems of power that enter into these debates. This gives us the reasons and further impetus to continue our research into how we can highlight the value of practical knowledge in healthcare education and healthcare services as much as abstract propositional knowledge. We wish to foreground the need for practitioners’ voices to be heard in public debates about what counts as high quality healthcare practices and how such quality should be judged.

Conclusion
We believe in our research as a means of enabling the midwives and nurses of the future to engage in forms of lifelong learning that enhance practices for
themselves and others. Massive challenges loom in relation to the need for practice improvement for increasing numbers of students without jeopardising the quality of health education, especially given the demographic changes taking place on a worldwide scale.

For our part, we believe that a key element in promoting the importance of projects such as ours is the development of a robust knowledge base from which others can learn. This chapter is an initial attempt in explaining how we are establishing such a knowledge base in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Tromsø.

References
Chapter 6

What makes teachers good at what they do?

The axiological model

Karen McArdle, Alison Hurrell and Yolanda Muñoz Martinez

Introduction

The chapter reports on a project undertaken in Scotland by colleagues from a Spanish University and a Scottish University, to explore how teachers learn to become ‘good’ at what they do. Perhaps everyone in teacher education, as well as parents, is interested in what makes teachers good at what they do but the voice of ‘good teachers’ themselves is not often heard. Our hope for the research we undertook and that informs this chapter was that it would help us understand what characterises good teachers, and lead to improvements in the pedagogy underpinning qualifying programmes for teachers in Scotland and Spain, as well as further afield.

First, we need to define what we mean by ‘good’ when talking about ‘good teachers’. Everyone has an idea from their experience of what a good teacher is (Heikkila 2012). ‘Good’ has, particularly since the 1970s, often been equated with ‘effectiveness’, but ‘effectiveness’ has faced the problem of being located in a modernist paradigm of productivity and outcomes. Doyle (1977) suggests that attempts to attribute differences in pupil achievement to generalisable dimensions of teacher behaviour are futile. The basic format of traditional teacher effectiveness studies tends to be a process in which outcomes are measured and teacher factors are explored to see how these might affect the outcomes (Muijs 2006). We share Doyle’s view, so in our research we chose instead to seek the voice of teachers to help us define what ‘good’ means rather than using our own definition. We did, however, need a starting point to identify ‘good’ teachers to include in our research, and this is described later in this chapter.

We anticipated that the idea of ‘goodness’ would be different for different teachers and this indeed turned out to be the case. We also sought to explore the ways in which teachers framed their experience of their lives and their practice and translated this into new ways of doing things. Goodson (2006) suggests that
Theories of teacher effectiveness have not included research data on teachers’ lives and it is the theories that are at fault. We agree, because we have seen in this research the ways in which teachers talk about their own personal lives in explaining practice, when they see life and practice as indivisible.

**The research process**

Our research was an interpretative qualitative study, which made use of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, we felt, was a relevant and accessible methodology for this research, in that it uses stories as a means of exploring how experience is understood and represented (Riessman 2008). We frame our research as a narrative because we want to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning. Also, what tend to be shared across experience-centred narrative research are individual, internal representations of phenomena – events, thoughts and feelings – to which narrative research gives expression. In particular, narrative builds on the use of stories to create personal identity and agency. Individuals constitute themselves as subjects by and in language (Greenhalgh 1992; Heikkila 2012).

We invited our participants to narrate their work history since leaving school, in the context of what had made them good at what they do, and to provide stories and examples of when and how they had learnt from practice. We found that participants enjoyed this process as they reported to us and found it illuminating as they discovered themselves what it was that made them good at what they do. The story may be understood as one’s identity, told, revised and recreated through life (Lieblich et al. 1998). Roberts (2002) asks, in the telling of stories to an audience and ourselves, do we reaffirm and reconstruct the self? We would argue from our experience that this can indeed be the case. We invest ourselves in our practices, so our experience and background, therefore, shape them (Goodson 2006).

The intimate detail of life histories with commentary and interpretation allows us to gain a feeling of knowing a life situation (Roberts 2002). We use Craig’s (2003) concept of story constellations, an approach that enables ‘multifaceted studies to be undertaken that take into account multiple clusters of stories, and many versions of stories narrated by multiple tellers’ (p. 11). The dynamic interplay of multiple interlocking narratives allows new knowledge to be created where these constellations meet or diverge.

We are conscious that our choice of which teachers to include in the study was significant and potentially troublesome in that it could be argued we had already decided what ‘good’ was; and, yes, we did need to make choices about who was good. Alison Hurrell is a teacher educator in modern languages in the University of Aberdeen and she chose the participants, using a range of criteria, which we sought to make transparent to ourselves through our use of reflective
diaries. Karen McArdle interviewed Alison Hurrell about her assumptions that underpinned her choices; we needed to explore our own values. We explored commonly used terminology in pedagogy, including justice, compassion, inclusion, and pathic sensitivity. We defined these values in terms of virtuous practice in all that teachers did and said with children, staff and parents/carers.

We chose men and women teachers on the basis that they were mature and experienced practitioners who would have substantial professional and life experience. All were known to Alison and had attended programmes taught in modern languages at the University of Aberdeen. We interviewed them using narrative inquiry. We chose to speak to both primary and secondary school teachers because of their contextual differences, such as curriculum, subject disciplines and systems and structures and yet practice in both contexts is underpinned by axiology, that is, the philosophical study of goodness, or value.

In this chapter we focus only on the primary school teachers we interviewed. Interviewees were also selected partly on the basis of geographical convenience and accessibility to us. Reflexive interviews showed us that the participants had been chosen for different reasons because we had used a pool of criteria that reflected the values of our participants. Some values were more predominant than others in each teacher. For example, one male primary school teacher in Scotland was chosen because Alison felt that he was caring of the children and had high expectations. He was fun in the classroom and she had observed that children laughed in his classroom.

I first meet Kevin almost 10 years ago when he joins the Modern Languages in the Primary School training programme, a 27-day Continuing Professional Development course over an academic year. I am the facilitator and he (along with most of the class) an apprehensive faux-beginner, lacking confidence in his foreign language competence and in his pedagogical competence to teach French to the children in his class.

Almost immediately, what emerges is his sense of fun, his enjoyment of playful approaches to learning, his own and that of his pupils in the future, when he would be responsible for their foreign language learning. There is always laughter when he is around. He is caring and kind with other participants, less at ease with ‘performance’ in front of peers. He is modest about his own considerable progress and a celebrator of all the small steps made by his co-participants. Throughout the course he is anxious to receive focused feedback and works hard to overcome pronunciation difficulties. During circle times, he talks passionately about his teaching community and his aspirations for the children and their parents/carers and inspires other colleagues in the class who might be in danger of losing their sense of mission in teaching. At the end of the course, he returns to his classroom.
A few months later, I have the pleasure and privilege of being invited into his classroom to work with him and his class. Again, there is laughter and midst the chaos of children poring over resources on the floor, bottoms in the air, papers strewn around for note-taking, coloured crayons and talk, what I see is the confluence of Kevin’s teaching, where his way of being with the children, his values and virtues and his pedagogy intermingle and flow. He is at ease with himself and the children and they are at ease with him. There is much learning going on. (Extract from Alison’s Reflexive Research Diary, 2012)

Another participant, a younger woman, was chosen because she set boundaries in the classroom for children from disadvantaged backgrounds but these boundaries were flexible enough to respond to the needs of the individual child and the class. She was also described in reflexive interview as bright and resilient.

Eva arrives for day 1 of Modern Language in Primary Schools training, and immediately starts chatting to colleagues she knows, quietly introducing herself to others. Her face is alive with enthusiasm, fun, mischief, and she is alert to the apprehension of others. She is a good linguist but is modest about her foreign language competence and throughout the course is mindful of others. She does all she can to support less confident colleagues, to encourage them, to praise them and to exhort them to go always a little bit further.

She revels in ‘performance’ and looks for detailed feedback on what she needs to take forward, always with her class in mind. And always questions: what will engage them? What will enthuse them? How will she scaffold all her children’s learning? How will she bring out the best in all? She consistently thinks creatively when considering curriculum: what will best help the children to see the interconnectedness of their learning in English and in French? How can she make French culture come alive for them? What transferable skills may be developed? She has high aspirations for herself and the children in her class and is determined to achieve them.

She is, however, realistic about the challenges that lie ahead for some of her pupils and actively seeks out opportunities to discuss issues, candidly and with humility, with colleagues and with me. Frequent e-mails are exchanged between us as she plans for her children’s learning, teaches them and then celebrates the ‘little things’ of that process. Some of the children identified as having additional learning needs are acquiring a new self-image — they are learning French and are achieving success along with their peers; it appears that playful approaches and drama work well together.

I am invited to the school to see the children’s winning dramatic performance of ‘La Chenille Affamée’ (‘The Hungry Caterpillar’). We are in the gym hall and I observe Eva with the children. They are excited, giggly and a little inattentive at times but Eva quietly brings them all back on task, reminds them of the
What makes teachers good at what they do? What did we mean by ‘confluence’? Literally, the fluid and balanced interplay of philosophy, pedagogy, classroom practice and underpinning values, but these are constantly adapting, at times consciously and at times subconsciously, to the changing environment of the classroom and the needs of the children. To the onlooker, they appear woven into a seamless teaching unity.

The journey of analysis

Polkinghorne (2007) states: ‘Readers should be able to follow the presented evidence and argument enough to make their own judgment as to the relative validity of the claim’ (p. 476). The reader is an active participant in interpreting the stories, and this dialectic of reading requires a re-examination of ourselves (Evans 1998) as we interpret using our own experiences. This is the reason we present here substantial extracts of the text of our interviews so that the reader can make an informed judgement about our claims based on textual evidence. The validity of a story, Polkinghorne states, is attested to by its rich detail and revealing descriptions.

Our analysis is described here as a journey, as it took us some considerable time and rehearsal and critique of arguments to reach our conclusions. Evans (1998) cites Winter (1991) who states that theory cannot simply be derived from data but is always the outcome of a process in which researchers ‘explore’ as well as organise and integrate their own and others’ theoretical resources as an interpretative response to data. It is this exploration that we wish to represent. Interviews with participants, which generally lasted at least an hour, were transcribed. We found that participants had enjoyed the interview process and chose without exception to talk beyond the allotted hour. Initially, we undertook Holistic Content Analysis (Lieblich et al. 1998) and identified leitmotifs and themes that emerged from our data within and between transcripts. It soon became apparent that each individual was ‘good’ in different ways but that what was shared was a consistency and coherence in a number of features of the conversation.

It became apparent that teachers were consistent and congruent within themselves in their philosophies of education, their pedagogies, and their classroom practices, all directed towards the wellbeing of the child, the parents and the staff. They were not, however, consistent between each other, and we shall return to this later in this chapter. Practice was influenced for all
participants by a supportive environment, and role models (both positive and negative) were remembered in the work history each gave. The emphasis of each participant varied between philosophy, pedagogy, and classroom practice, but each dimension remained consistent for all our participants. For example, one teacher focused strongly on classroom practice whereas another focused strongly on pedagogy. Both, however, focused also on the other two dimensions and both explained positions that were underpinned by values: in terms of this chapter, an axiological approach. We define this values-oriented positioning as a process of axiology: the study and exploration of human values, which enables us to identify the underlying beliefs and values that influence our perceptions and interpretation of our life experiences, our decisions and actions – to understand clearly why we do what we do.

Eva provides a helpful example in which the three dimensions are present in one segment of conversation on the importance of boundaries with children and the link to respect. The three dimensions overlap but are apparent in the extract below.

Eva: I think that boundaries are very important. In my experience of children here and the children that I’ve worked with … we are responsible for a lot of the pastoral care that they get … for some of them, this is where routine is. At home it can be chaos … but they come in here, they know what to expect from me. They know where the boundaries are. They know if they push them they’ll still be there.…

… I think that’s how you get respect … you get respect from being consistent and not changing your tactics too often. Obviously as a teacher you are flexible, and I’m always trying to come up with new behaviour management strategies, because a gimmick works well in my class for a while but it wears off, so yes, boundaries would be one of the main things. And I think being open and honest with the children as well.

They like to know a bit about you. Often I would start a little activity where we would write down three things about ourselves and one of them is to be made up; and then we’d read them out and try to guess which one had been made up and they loved that because one of the things that the children really like is that I don’t like the colour pink. They just find this fascinating (laughter). ‘Oh here’s a pink folder. What do you think of this?’ (laughter). ‘Do you like my new trainers? They’re pink!’ That’s nice … that’s an icebreaker … I’m not having too much fun, I’m not trying to be their friend. I’m just letting them have a little glimpse at my life, little bits about who I am and that’s enough for them to think, ‘Oh, this is a person, so …’. I don’t know how it works but getting respect from children, once you’ve got it, it is priceless. (Interview with Eva, June 2011)

The philosophy of education, which we define as the underpinning beliefs about the profession of education, is that pastoral care is important. Eva discusses
pedagogy in thinking about flexibility, boundaries and respect, and the fact that she does not have too much fun is unimportant. We define pedagogy in this context as the principles that underpin learning and teaching. She gives an example of classroom practice that contributes to respect through revealing something of herself to the children. Each of these dimensions is consistent in an axiological hierarchy and is underpinned by values linked to ‘respect’ or valuing the individual.

Professional conduct is not wholly reducible to the technical aspects of good practice. Carr (2006) describes the Aristotelian distinction between technical and moral dimensions of human practical reflection, recognising that one might well have one without the other. However, for our good teachers, the most important finding was that this consistency was underpinned by axiology. We considered it important to decide what this axiology consisted of because a philosophy, pedagogy and practice could be coherent and consistent but be underpinned by what we considered to be a negative value base which resulted in practice that was not directed towards the wellbeing of the child.

So, we embarked on a search for the underpinning axiology of a ‘good teacher’. In our transcripts, we identified examples of inclusion, diversity and child-centredness. These were apparent but as we considered them, we concluded that these terms had lost their normative and substantive content, much in the same way that van Manen (2007) suggests the terms ‘excellence and quality’ have. These terms appeared to be tired, and did not represent the depth and richness of the stories of the people we were studying. ‘Inclusion’, for example, is a widely used term that can represent ideas from ‘inclusion of disabled children in mainstream teaching’ to ‘inclusion as a means of engaging children in the learning process’. We ran the danger of identifying tired values that could be used as a ‘tick box’ measure of ‘correct’ values. We persisted in our search for values by developing profile summaries of the respondents from our transcripts. Here is the profile of Eva.

‘A way with children’, rapport, trust, valuing all humanity, recognising individuality, knowing children’s personality, the need for boundaries for children’s security, all children need to achieve success, knowing the children well, happiness for the children, values honesty, fairness and equity, need to hear the children, respect is important, and so is justice. She values fun and excitement. She feels a need to meet individual needs. All these have to do with human wellbeing.

Eva is a delight of a teacher in that she cares about the wellbeing of children in so many dimensions. She cares about the child (e.g. their happiness) and the child as part of a pupil community (e.g. fairness, justice in relation to others); she cares about morality of children (honesty), as well the obvious (success, learning).
Eva is a reflective teacher if we define it as the ability to interrogate herself.
(Extract from Karen’s research diary, 2012)

From developing profiles like this for all of our participants, it became apparent that we were describing not just values but a much richer essence of the teacher; we were describing facets of personality. We were not looking only at values, deeply held beliefs, but at how these beliefs were linked to practice. This difference in the balance of values and practices was, we found, idiosyncratic and this idiosyncrasy was delightful.

Not values but virtues
We found ourselves instead of looking at values, looking at virtues. We propose that virtues are ‘good values’ in action. Aristotle argues that moral value is located primarily within a person in a certain set of character traits known as the virtues (Birmingham 2004). Birmingham explains, for example, that ‘phronesis’ has been defined as a practical intelligence, practical wisdom or prudence, which involves knowing how to apply general principles in particular situations, that is, a virtue of the mind. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) see phronesis as ‘being aware’ in a particular situation and finding a helpful course of action on the basis of this strengthened awareness. Virtues have a moral dimension and, while referring to principles of professional ethics as deontic norms, Carr (2006) suggests we would wish teachers to possess aretaic norms (from the Greek for ‘virtue’ or ‘excellence’). What combines these two sets of ideas is the knowing of the individual teacher, not the prescription of ethical norms. This knowing is central and we suggest that virtues are intrinsic to the character of the good teacher. Birmingham (2004) agrees with this intrinsic dimension:

Virtue-centred ethics hold that moral value is centred within a person who is performing moral actions rather than within the actions themselves, a subtle yet important distinction. Actions are related to virtue, but they are secondary to and derive from virtue as indications and natural outgrowths of a virtuous character (p. 316).

Van Manen (2007) further suggests that professional knowledge is pathic, that is, feeling or perception, so that ‘the act of practice depends on the sense and sensuality of the body, personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations …’ (p. 20). He explains that there are modes of knowing that inhere so immediately in our lived practices that they seem invisible. Campbell (2010) shares our view that a holistic approach is important on the part of the teacher whose intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical engagement is an important dimension of a teacher’s professional practice. Carr (2003) argues that there is a strong case for
conceiving teaching as an activity on the model of virtues rather than skills. We argue that the ‘confluence’ of virtues is important to a model of ‘the good teacher’.

**Confluence**

With Eva, the notion of ‘valuing all humanity’, which we wrote in her profile, was much more telling than the term ‘inclusion’. Other participants were recorded in their profiles as caring, kind, tolerant, just and respectful. Again we were faced with the dilemmas of considering values; we were in danger of deciding which virtues were needed. Some are no doubt desirable – tolerance, respect, lack of prejudice and so on but, from our research, it appeared that it was the ‘confluence’ of virtues in the personality of the teacher that mattered. It was who they were that mattered, not what they were. In narrative inquiry in general and in this paper in particular it is the voice of the participants that matters; Eva acts as our example of this confluence of virtues. Expertise, as Carr (2003) suggests, is a matter of constant creative interplay with the needs and challenges of the pedagogical occasion.

Below we present Eva’s view of what makes a good teacher to show the confluence of what we consider to be virtues.

Karen: Yes, so what do you think makes a good teacher? You’ve talked about personality.

Eva: Yes. Having a presence in school … but I think listening to children, listening to find out about them, find out who they are, to remember that children are all individuals. The thirty-three children in my class are thirty-three very different children. … I would like to think I know a lot about every single child. When it comes to report writing, I always like to be very personal to them and I do feel that I know them very well and I think taking the time and the effort to do that makes a good teacher.

Also, making sure that you’re challenging all the children and engaging them. Part of the difficulty of getting the children to be effective learners is making them want to learn. I think being a good teacher is finding ways to make all children want to learn, how to engage them. You can’t possibly tailor things to everyone; but it doesn’t have to be the subject, it can be the type of activity. Thinking about their learning styles, being excited about something, they’ll get excited about it because they see me and think, ‘Oh, this must be really good.’

The way I model activities and behaviour in class, scaffolding them so that all children are successful. I think that, if you are not successful, learning can just be so hard and just very … I don’t know, it would just switch you off very quickly, because what’s the point? (Interview, June 2011)
This view of what makes a good teacher can be compared with Kevin’s view of what he termed the ‘skills’ of working at the primary school where he was head teacher. Kevin also looks at the home context for its link to what happens in school:

Kevin: … I think what that taught me was the importance of getting the right people in front of the children, and the right make up of staff, the right person. I think to be honest, you need to have (and I’m not sure if you can list them), but you need to have real, specific skills to work with the kind of children and families we work with.

Karen: What are those skills? You knew I was going to ask you that (laughter)

Kevin: Right, well, I think … a bit of realistic expectations of the children and their families. We have pressures from above in terms of raising attainment and closing the gap but, as teachers, we need to be realistic about that and take it a step at a time. I think we need empathy. Although it can’t be used as an excuse, for some of our children, it … needs to be considered that these children don’t have the best of backgrounds. They don’t have the same supportive network and supportive backgrounds that perhaps we had as youngsters, not all of them though. I think it’s important that we don’t just label ….

Karen: … the whole lot …

Kevin: … some youngsters don’t have supportive backgrounds. … we need to have skills in terms of teamwork because you can’t do the job on your own. You need to have people around you who you can trust, who will trust you, who will listen. You need to be prepared to listen and be able to learn from others no matter how experienced or inexperienced they are … I think it is absolutely vital that we are able to take criticism as well because there are days where you will get it wrong and I think for our children it’s important that we hold our hands up and say, ‘Hey! I got that wrong!’

Karen: Yes.

Kevin: And I often start a discussion with children by saying, ‘Look, nobody’s perfect, not even me!’ (laughter.) And I think that sometimes people expect that children will see teachers and their head teachers as … some kind of higher power.

Karen: Yes.

Kevin: I don’t want to be a higher power. I want to be down in there with the children. … I often say to the children, ‘Yes, I’m your head teacher, but I’m still your friend, right?’
What makes teachers good at what they do?

Kevin describes the jobs he has undertaken throughout his career, and how in each job, from probationer to head teacher, the children saw him in the same way.

They knew they were going to get the same level of trust and respect, and I was going to deal with them in the same way. So, consistency would be another skill. I think children need to see consistency, perhaps more so in our setting, because the rest of the lives of many of our children is not consistent. And it's not structured and it's not reliable either. So, if school is consistent, then it can work. (Interview, June 2011)

There are commonalities in Eva's and Kevin's conversations in that both talk of engagement, the chaos of families, and the need for boundaries or consistency. They both discuss respect but the differences between them are also important. Both orientations to these concepts could be considered 'good' but they are different because of the differences in Eva and Kevin, differences in both personality and experience. Virtues are apparent, the desire for good relationships with the child and the desire to value each child regardless of background; but the way these are articulated are different and it is the confluence of virtues that makes them distinctive.

Possible implications for teacher education

If virtues are indeed important we are left with the teacher educator’s question of how to instil virtue. Fenstermacher (2010) proposes that virtue is acquired or ‘picked up’ by being around people who are themselves virtuous. The learning from others’ modelled behaviour was important to our ‘good’ teachers, who cited examples of other teachers who had impressed them or from whom they had learned to differ. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) propose that teachers’ Gestalts should be taken seriously as the starting point for professional development, where Gestalt helps us see situations as an entity and helps us to respond to them as such.

For immediate teaching situations this means that the many and multifaceted conditions and events embedded in a given situation are combined into one holistic perceptual identity (p.9).

We propose that the confluence of personality contributes to their proposed Gestalt but in a way that is fluid and dependent on the possession of the virtues that underpin an approach to a situation, not just the cognition, feelings and values that Korthagen and Kessels propose.

Virtues can be modelled, an important understanding for our teachers, and which should be embedded in teacher education. If, however, teachers are good at what they do because of who they are, then there is need in teacher education for self-evaluation: knowing who one is and, more importantly, the
links to practice and coherence between the dimensions is axiological. Sumison (2004) links self-evaluation and resilience, citing self-reflexivity as essential to personal and professional growth as well as the ability for early childhood teachers to find satisfaction and excitement in their work.

So, we propose an axiological model for teacher education (Figure 6.1), conscious that models run the danger of being counter to our notion of confluence, but we needed a means to formulate our thinking in relation to teacher education. This has direct implications for our decisions about placements, and for the programmes of teacher education in both Scotland and Spain. If student teachers are going to learn from others, these ‘others’ should be good models. We agree with Koerner and O’Connell (2002: 35) that placement is the culminating experience in a teacher education program. For good or ill, this experience has a significant impact on the student teacher who must juggle the responsibilities of teaching (and all that this entails) while developing relationships with one or more co-operating teachers and a university supervisor. It is time to think even more about what kind of model is the most appropriate for future teachers in schools during placements, and establish a protocol to select those role models that are so important. Darling-Hammond (2006: 9) writes that ‘powerful teacher education programs have a clinical curriculum as well as a didactic curriculum, and there should be a big effort to design a program where both are linked’.

This involves the need to establish coherence between classroom practice, pedagogy and philosophy of education. We suggest that this

Figure 6.1. The axiological model for teacher education
complex synthesis and integration cannot be expected in the beginning teacher but is underpinned by virtues, which are value based. Accordingly, fundamental to teacher education is the self-knowledge that can lead to an awareness of deeply held beliefs and how these manifest themselves as virtues. Values, we propose, can be influenced by modelling good practice. All our participants mentioned the influence of others on the development of their good practice. Practice must be focused on the wellbeing of the child. For teacher educators the importance of modelling good practice must include an awareness of the need for integration in themselves of philosophy, pedagogy and classroom practice. Frequently values are discussed in the teacher education programmes with which we authors are familiar in the two countries, but virtues or what values represent in action are less frequently discussed. It is this behaviour which manifests itself in the ‘good’ teacher according to our teachers’ understandings of what makes a good teacher.

References


Chapter 7

The value of researching civic responsibility in the context of Latvia

Lāsma Latsone and Linda Pavitola

Introduction

Citizenship education and civic responsibility are topical issues in educational programmes in Latvia, but their core principles tend not always to be lived in people’s lives. There is a lot of passive learning in this regard, and civic knowledge often remains at a theoretical level without becoming a value for the everyday life of citizens, including, in the context of education, students.

In Latvian society everyday understanding of civic responsibility has been greatly influenced by historical events and national culture; the same can be said about the notion of what it means to be part of a community. Working with emerging teachers and discussing different issues in Intercultural Education and Cultural Heritage in Education classes, we authors have observed that many students lack a critical understanding about civic matters and that they tend to associate civic responsibility with patriotism and the preservation of national and cultural values, neglecting the communal aspect necessary for purposeful action and involvement.

In this chapter we consider the following issues:

- Is community a lived value for our students, and how much are they prepared to take action for the benefit of the larger community?
- Do we, as adults and teachers, set a good example for our students?
- How can higher education contribute to educating students for civic responsibility and help them to transform this value into a virtue?

We also explain the basic concepts employed for this study, and provide a historical and cultural background regarding the formation of civic responsibility as a value in Latvian society, grounding the theory in research data gathered from student teachers in Liepaja University.

Civic responsibility, community and value formation

In A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility in the Curriculum (Gottlieb and Robinson 2006), civic responsibility is defined as ‘active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive
manner, with a focus on the common good’ (p. 16), which includes discussions also on other issues such as social justice, social change, participatory democracy, human dignity, and political awareness. This contributes to an understanding of what it means to be a citizen. We live in relationship with other people, and our social participation is expected for both private and also political, social, cultural and economic purposes.

Osler and Starkey (2005) distinguish between liberal, communitarian, civic republican and cosmopolitan approaches to citizenship, inviting everyone to consider themselves as citizens of a world community who share common human values. They define citizenship as a sense of belonging, a sense of gratitude and responsibility, and a shared symbolism (p. 99). Korsgaard (2001) expands this understanding of the concept stressing aspects of active citizenship that can serve as a frame of reference for forming civic responsibility, such as rights and duties (juridical and political status) and identity and belonging (social role). He believes that citizenship is embodied both in knowledge and values, and is also related to skills and competencies such as a capacity for communication and dialogue, to live with others, to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner, for negotiation, and for taking part in public debate and recognising and accept difference; this clearly shows the communal aspect of the concept. Thus, citizenship must be active, responsible and empowering, allowing people to feel at ease in a democratic culture and believe that their contribution can change the community they live in (European Commission 2005). In this context civic responsibility can be understood as the rights and duties of citizens, actions and attitudes associated with promoting democracy and social participation, and also identity and belonging, which helps to strengthen people’s commitment to their community.

Most European cultures, including Latvian, are identified as individualistic, rather than collective cultures, where people have learned to socialise in independent and self-reliant ways, thus becoming capable of assuming accountability and responsibility for personal problems and issues (Reynolds and Valentine 2004). However, perception of the need to be part of a community is growing, and people are becoming increasingly engaged in different communal efforts such as neighbourhood watch activities, care for nature and the environment, and educational projects. Appreciation of community contributes towards respecting other people and responsible action.

Community can be understood as a group of people living in the same locality, people that have common interests or form a distinct sector of society (for example, gay or ethnic communities). At the same time, being part of a community can mean sharing, participation and fellowship (The Online dictionary). Parekh (2000) describes communities as dynamic social groups with fluid boundaries and a capacity to welcome new members (cited in Osler and Starkey 2005: 108).
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) can be helpful for grasping how everybody belongs to many different communities (see Figure 7.1), from being a member of one’s family or neighbourhood, one’s educational, religious or employment grouping, or to the state or coalition of countries such as the European Union and the global world community; such formations unite all who dwell on this planet. The theory also includes the rights and duties of people as citizens, as well as their actions and attitudes associated with promoting democracy and social participation, so helping to strengthen people’s commitments to their communities at mezzo and macro levels.

Thus, the development of civic responsibility and active citizenship can be seen as a conceptual system, where microsystem, functioning within several microsystemic dimensions, develops interactional and transactional relations within mezosystemic and macrosystemic dimensions (Bethere and Mackevica 2011). We strongly agree with Horsdal (2004), that the concept of citizenship cannot be restricted to a univocal relation in which the state provides a number of guarantees to its citizens. It must be a bi-

Figure 7.1. Development of civic responsibility within an ecological systems model (adapted from Bronfenbrenner 1979)
or multidirectional process in which citizens are prompted to exercise their rights and to take advantage of the opportunities they are given. As a result, active citizenship, including civic responsibility, can become a constant interchange between personal development and society, leading to a commitment towards community.

But where does civic responsibility and community stand in people’s hierarchy of values? Do we regard personal freedom as more important than the needs of family or larger community? What influences our hierarchy of values?

According to Talbot (2000), to value something is to have reason to believe that others also value it, or that others should value it because it is valuable (pp 15–16). Values may be seen as a basis for healthy personal development, for caring interpersonal relationships and a humane and democratic society, as well as for a just and peaceful world. We agree with Harrison (2006) who says that there is a deep connection between personal values and human progress, and that everyone must take responsibility to ensure that these values, beliefs and attitudes are not neglected in the process of human development (p. xi). Thus, we see civic responsibility as a value that helps people to live a rewarding life (Brighouse 2006) that can lead to personal growth and economic prosperity. Lickona (1991) emphasizes respect and responsibility as core values of universal, public morality that promote the good of the individual and the whole community. By ‘respect’ Lickona means respect towards self, others and environment, but construes ‘responsibility’ as an extension of respect oriented towards others, responding to other people’s needs. It is a positive obligation to care: ‘when people love good, they take pleasure in doing good’ (p. 60).

According to Harrison (2006), there are four principal means of transmitting values from generation to generation: a) child rearing, b) education, c) religion and d) the media (p. xiv). Since values education starts in the home, a child is initially influenced mainly by family values and practices that form the child’s hierarchy of ethical values. Children are ‘wired’ to their parents’ values, and values show in their behaviours (Amighetti 2006: 22). These values are supplemented by the values of role models and the social class, religion, ethnicity of the child’s family and their historical context. According to Kagan (2006), families can advance or retard democracy, social justice and prosperity; therefore there is need to examine hierarchies of ethical values and to consider their origin in biology and upbringing (p. 13). It is widely recognized that vast numbers of adults lack the basic knowledge, skills and supportive values that would facilitate their effective participation in democratic politics (Niemi and Finkel 2006). Parents and teachers may therefore come to act as role models for children, displaying civic responsibility in their daily activities, but questions arise – are they able to do so? Is civic responsibility a value in their own lives?
Historical influence, culture and the role of education

Davies (2005) recommends exploring the link between history and citizenship, given that the links between them are strong, where features of the past become part of contemporary society. In a Latvian context, history has also significantly influenced people’s understanding of civic responsibility and its place in any value hierarchy. For many centuries the small piece of land that is nowadays called Latvia has been desired by more powerful countries – Germany, Poland, Sweden, Tsarist and Soviet Russia; the last fifty years under Soviet Union domination have left especially painful scars in the collective memory of the country and people. The Soviet regime has deeply influenced people’s attitudes towards life, leaving many with what is often called a ‘post-totalitarian mentality’, characterized by passivity, an incapacity to question reality, low self-esteem, a sense of fatalism and fanaticism, a tendency to expect solutions from strong leaders rather than from personal initiative, and a tendency to dramatize oneself as the impotent victim of uncontrollable circumstances (Walters 1999; Navickas 2003).

During communist rule, the majority of Latvian people tended to avoid any engagement in politics. This attitude of indifference towards political issues seems set to continue as either people do not believe they can have any real influence on the political situation, or they still perceive themselves as victims and public authority as oppressors (Jaura and Kusnierik 2001: 13). Moreover, because of the economic crisis of the early twenty-first century, the interests of many Latvians would mostly be towards the practical issues of everyday life, such as family finances, businesses, taxes, public transportation, crime, unemployment, healthcare or education. This can possibly explain the passivity and reluctance of people to get involved in communal, social and political activities.

In the case of Latvia, another significant factor has greatly influenced public understandings of civic responsibility – that of culture. It is important to emphasize that national culture was the major cornerstone in the second half of the nineteenth century, the period when Latvia did not have its own state. Culture served to unite the Latvian community through the Latvian language and its socio-historical practices. The emphasis was put on the ‘culture nation’, a concept that foregrounds the idea of a common, unifying culture and language, and the need to support their enhancement and sustainability for understanding the notion of national community. In contrast, the concept of the ‘civic nation’, that has been used in Latvia only since the end of the nineteenth century, along with ideas about national self-determination, broadens the understanding of the ‘culture nation’, incorporating qualities such as loyalty to the state, the duties and rights of citizens, and their active involvement in implementing and strengthening the
goals of national community (Latvija: pārskats 2011). We are still in a process of transition from being merely a ‘culture nation’ towards a ‘civic nation’, where national affiliation becomes an issue of cultural and democratic co-partnership rather than an issue of origin (Ijabs 2007), and the dimension of culture is one of the most important in this process.

Education should be considered as an important means during the process of transition to assist citizens to become effective and rational participants in public decision-making and performance, as well as in creating new relationships between individuals and community (Brighouse 2006; Cairns 2000). As Freire (1972) suggests, learning can only come about through praxis, reflection and action upon the world in order to change it (p. 28).

Moreover, Bruner (1990) and Horsdal (2004) highlight the need to focus on the development of cultural tools, such as creativity and self-expression, belonging, identity, ‘knowledge capital’ and others, in order to live in a changing world not as passive victims but as active participants in the constant process of the recreation, reinterpretation and renegotiation of culture. We believe that in the case of Latvia, cultural values are the ones that reach across contexts and help to create an understanding of civic responsibility and active citizenship. The development of creative, human and personal civic responsibility in the context of lifelong education – this is one of the basic guidelines of the cultural education system supported by Latvian State culture policy.

Education has a critical role to play both in enabling us to respond to the processes of globalization, and also in the formation of our values – the acquisition of the value of civic responsibility, quality of participation in the democratic life of a community and in the promotion of its culture (Citizenship Education at School 2005; Talbot 2000). In educational establishments students are prepared for their profession as well as for identifying ways in which they can contribute to wider society. This issue is particularly topical in contemporary teacher education programmes, where we prepare teachers as authorities and role models for the next generation. Therefore, we must consider whether it is crucial to consider civic responsibility as a value worth passing on, and which, with the help of educational activities, can become a virtue in people’s daily lives.

**Methodology of the research**

Our research is based on the theoretical findings that support ideas about civic responsibility as a core component of active citizenship and also as a personal value. Because of historical factors and when considering Latvian society as a culture nation in transition to being a civic nation, the emphasis has been put on cultural values as a means for an understanding and development of civic responsibility.
Goals of the research: these are:

- to discover students’ understanding of values, community and civic responsibility and how much they are willing to participate in creating a civically responsible society
- to deepen understanding about civic responsibility and community as values and to strengthen these values through group discussions and further research.

Respondents: we identified 75 first year students from different teacher training programmes (preschool, primary, secondary and special education teachers, teachers of history, music, sports and dance) enrolled on the study courses ‘Intercultural Education’ and ‘Cultural Heritage in Education’.

Research methods: we guided small group discussions and structured interviews conducted by students.

Research process: In small group discussions (three to five participants), students were asked to respond to four sets of questions related to values and understanding of community and civic responsibility. They were encouraged to think about their own thoughts and attitudes as well as listen to the opinions of other students. Building on the outcomes of the group discussions, each student was requested to conduct three interviews asking two questions, and they gathered responses from a total of 225 respondents. The answers were categorised and analysed, and questions for further research work were suggested.

Research results
In the small group discussions the first set of questions was about values:

What are the three main values of your life? What has influenced the formation of your values?

The results were as follows:

- 98% of respondents stated that the greatest value is their family.
- The next most often mentioned values were health (48%), education (26%), friends (25%), and spiritual development (11%).
- Only four students mentioned values like peace, freedom and homeland in their main hierarchy of values.
- 50% of respondents suggested that their value development had mostly been influenced by their family; 30% by care for the environment; 24% by work and life experience, but only 9% thought that their values were influenced by school, teachers or the state.
Is community a value in your life? and What community is it important for you to belong to?

The results showed:

- 86% of respondents believe that community is a value in their lives (‘we all need community’; ‘it gives a sense of belonging’; ‘it develops my personality and attitudes’; ‘it provides support’; ‘it fosters development and creativity’; ‘it opens new horizons’; ‘in community we can help each other’; ‘it forms relationships’, ‘it is very powerful’).
- For 9% of students community is partly a value (‘I like to be individualist’, ‘my own interests are more important’, ‘I belong to community but I am responsible only for my own actions’), but 5% of respondents answered negatively: (‘I do not belong to any community’; ‘I don’t want anybody to control me’; ‘I like to be alone by myself and my work’).
- Most respondents (52%) want to belong to the community called family, 10% to their workplace community, 6% to choirs or a dance group, leaving 5% who wish to belong to Latvian community, and 3% to society. These responses indicate the microsystemic understanding of community, clearly pointing to the need to emphasise the link between personal values and life in society.

The next set of questions focused on an understanding of civic responsibility:

What is civic responsibility? Is it a value in your life? Do you consider yourself a civically responsible person?

The results showed:

- 47% of respondents linked civic responsibility with engagement in public life; 38% to loving, respecting and being proud of one’s country. Others defined civic responsibility as caring for the country’s future, taking the initiative on behalf of society, paying taxes and obeying the law, being patriotic.
- 61% of respondents declared that civic responsibility is a value in their lives (‘I love and respect my country’; ‘I want to influence events that happen in the state’; ‘I believe that I can make things better’), but for 37%, civic responsibility is a lesser value (‘it is not a primary issue for me, not too important’; ‘there are more important values in my life’; ‘the state is in a big mess’; ‘I disagree with state politics’, ‘I am not patriotic, but I love my land’, ‘I don’t have any interest in civic responsibility’; ‘civic responsibility is meaningless’; ‘it’s sad how the state treats its people’).
There was one negative response as well. The majority (71% of respondents) consider themselves as civically responsible people, 27% as partly responsible. Also in this category one response was negative.

Students were asked:

*Has the process of education helped you to become more civically responsible?*

The results showed:

- 40% of respondents replied ‘No’ (‘in my educational journey no attention was paid to civic issues’; ‘schools teach too much inappropriate theory’; ‘nobody taught me about the civic duties of citizens’; ‘too little time was spent on patriotism, more moral values were cultivated’).
- 53% of respondents chose to respond as ‘partly’ (‘I wish these issues had been stressed more’; ‘students themselves need to take greater initiative’; ‘there are contradictions – teachers teach patriotism, but then talk about how bad life is in this country’).
- Only 7% of respondents gave a positive reply, indicating the need for broadening understandings of civic responsibility, and pointing out that schools and higher education establishments should take greater responsibility for educating the new generation in social and civic matters.

The last set of questions was about students’ willingness to contribute towards change:

*Do you think you will be able to influence the social, educational and political processes in your country?*

The results showed:

- Only 25% of respondents said that they hoped to be agents of change for creating a better society (‘as a teacher I want to foster positive thinking, form positive traits of character’; ‘I want to teach children about norms in society’; ‘I want to change the situation by educating children’; ‘I will teach children to protect the environment’; ‘I want to encourage the growth of patriotic pupils who love their land and love life in general’).
- 35% of respondents said that they would like to contribute to social change but they saw their possibilities as limited (‘I cannot do anything alone’; ‘first I need to get an education’; ‘let’s wait and see’; ‘too difficult to bring about change’; ‘I want to contribute only to education, not politics’).
A surprisingly large group of respondents (25%) replied ‘No’ (‘I have no motivation’; ‘change is difficult’; ‘too much corruption around’; ‘my opinion does not count’; ‘I don’t have any leadership characteristics’; ‘I cannot impose my views on others’; ‘nobody will listen to an ordinary person’; ‘I am not interested’).

These responses indicate the degree of indifference and low self-esteem of a large group of students and point out the urgency of placing greater emphasis on issues of community and responsibility in teacher training processes, thereby encouraging them to believe that a better future lies in their own hands.

The group discussions have also raised some important questions about values, and an understanding that the ones we accept tend to be based on what society has considered as values, and which have therefore become personal ones. Also they have revealed the need to look deeper into issues of culture as significant influencing factors in forming understandings of civic responsibility. Therefore, each student was asked to interview three people in order to discover coherence between the cultural values popularly identified as the most important and those really valued in people’s lives, and their influence for life in social community.

Two questions were asked:

**What best represents Latvian culture and its values? What are the highest rated Latvian cultural values for you?**

The interviews revealed a wide range of answers, which we organised according to the categories in the responses (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3). It became evident that cultural values reflected also a range of civic values.

![Figure 7.2. What best represents Latvian culture and its values?](image-url)
Drawing on the findings of Korsgaard (2001), the European Commission (2005) and Osler and Starkey (2005) that civic responsibility can be explained in terms of rights and duties, actions and attitudes, and identity and belonging, Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show that the answers given fit mostly into these categories:

- **Identity and belonging** – music, concerts, festivals; celebrations, traditions, habits; Song and Dance Festivals; folklore, folk songs, folk dance;
- **Action and attitudes** – patriotism, love of homeland, ability to stand for cultural values; Latvian language; Latvian history, anthem, flag, coat of arms.

Significantly, a commitment to rights and duties was not reflected. Although the categories are the same, there are significant differences in the percentage of answers. Both figures show a prevalence of categories that reflect identity and belonging, but they reveal a gap between values considered important by society and individuals’ values: for example, if the category *Music, concerts, festivals* is almost similar in both figures (Figure 7.2 – 73% and Figure 7.3 – 68%), then the categories *Celebrations, traditions, habits* (Figure 7.2 – 71% and Figure 7.3 – 52%) and *Song and Dance Festivals* (Figure 7.2 – 69% and Figure 7.3 – 24%) suggest that these values are only partly lived in people’s lives, whereas the category *Folklore, folk songs, folk dance* (Figure 7.2 – 35% and Figure 7.3 – 51%) indicates increasing importance in the area of lived values. The interviews revealed that people also highly value art, artists, architecture, literature, poetry and ballet, and subscribe to a view of Latvians as a nation of singers and dancers.

Striking incoherence has been reflected also in the categories linked with issues of action and attitudes: if in Figure 7.2 the categories relating to *Patriotism,*
love of homeland, ability to stand for cultural values; Latvian language; Latvian history; Anthem, flag, coat of arms carry percentages of 18%, 15%, 6% and 3% respectively, then in Figure 7.3 these comparative figures are significantly higher: 35%, 39%, 17% and 4%. Respondents mentioned Latvia as a value, pride of homeland and enhancement of national cultural values. This suggests that these dimensions have not been strengthened sufficiently by community (at a mezosystemic level), but highly valued by individuals (at a microsystemic level). The appearance of the category Hardworking nation, strong spirit only in Figure 7.2 (9%) also indicates that this notion is only declarative, whereas the category Family, family traditions in Figure 7.3 (9%) reflects it as a value of personal significance that corresponds with the results of group discussions. This emphasises the need to develop interactional relations within microsystemic and mezosystemic dimensions. The answers did not reveal any indication towards any aspects of civic responsibility related to rights and duties. Moreover, the promotional role of education was not considered sufficiently significant to be mentioned, which corresponds with the findings from the group discussions.

Summary and conclusions
The research results confirmed the theoretical findings of others as well as pointed to the cultural and historical background as profoundly significant for an in-depth understanding of civic responsibility and whether to adopt it as a personal value. As Latvia is still in a process of transition from culture nation towards civic nation, cultural tools can be powerful factors both in the process of national identity development, and also in promoting civic responsibility and active citizenship. The research also revealed considerable inconsistency and incoherence between lived values and those defined by society’s and individuals’ values, and provided evidence for the need to pay more attention to aspects of civic responsibility linked with rights, duties and personal activity that could help to strengthen interactional and transactional relationships between micro and mezzo systems.

As democratic educators we should aim to deepen students’ understanding of the concepts of community and civic responsibility, emphasise systemic thinking, and encourage students to achieve a healthier balance between private and social values; this would possibly contribute towards their greater social involvement and activism for the benefit of wider society. We agree with Gundara (2000) who suggests that we need many more thoughtful, politically educated and active citizens who would seek solutions to conflicts in democratic and intelligent ways, not through violence.

As the result of this study, we suggest the following steps for achieving the desired outcomes:
• to become aware of the essence of civic responsibility by employing cultural and educational tools to promote active participation in public life
• to develop active citizenship by emphasizing social participation in order to develop a greater sense of identity and belonging, promoting actions and attitudes, understanding rights and duties
• to strengthen commitment to the community by linking personal development with benefit to society, when civic responsibility becomes a personal value

We do not work or learn in community; we are part of community. As we are all invited to active and responsible social participation, it is crucial to become more knowledgeable about one’s own culture, learn to appreciate differences in other people’s, and hold community as a value. Values become virtues when they are put into practice. Therefore talking and teaching about values is not enough – good examples are needed!

References


Chapter 8

Re-articulating the values and virtues of Moravian action research

Joseph M. Shosh

Introduction
The fastest growing graduate degree program in the United States of America from 1997–2007 was the master’s degree in education. As the Center for American Progress has pointed out, though, no positive correlation has been found between the master’s degree per se and student classroom achievement (Roza and Miller 2009). Because teachers across the United States generally receive a pay raise for credits earned, there is incredible incentive for teachers to accrue credits, whether or not those credits add value to the teaching and learning that go on in the classroom. In exchange for largely publicly funded tuition dollars, institutions of higher education have unfortunately engaged in what former Teachers College president Arthur Levine (2005) has termed a ‘race to the bottom’ where U.S. schools of education ‘seem intent on helping students meet the minimum certification requirements with the least amount of effort, using the fewest university resources’ (p. 3).

We know, though, that teaching can and does have a profound effect on student achievement. In fact, a recent large-scale study in the state of North Carolina found that the difference in student achievement between those who had the most and least qualified teachers were greater than the combined influences of race and parental education (Darling-Hammond 2010; Clotfelder, Ladd and Vigdor 2007). What exactly do effective teachers do that may not be occurring in less effective classrooms, and how might an action research-based graduate education curriculum ensure that teachers are able to elicit student engagement and achievement in the classroom?

Teachers who have chosen to engage in an inquiry-based, action research approach to teaching and learning within Moravian’s graduate education program have rejected Levine’s ‘race to the bottom’ and have instead gathered and analyzed teacher research data in a process of holding themselves to high standards; identifying specific practices leading to student engagement and achievement; modifying instruction to meet the needs of individual learners; valuing diverse learners; and collaborating effectively with others (Goe, Bell and Little 2008). From 2003–2012, 144 practicing teachers enrolled in Moravian
College’s graduate education program engaged in multiple action research cycles in which they documented the actions they took that led to greater student achievement and engagement, collaboration, ownership, instructional differentiation, and metacognition – even as they overcame multiple challenges while doing so.

This chapter begins with an historical overview of the values that define graduate teacher education at Moravian College, presents the program’s curricular design, and then summarizes the action research efforts undertaken by teachers during the program’s first ten years. The chapter then goes on to explore those updates being made to the program design to meet the needs of the next generation of teacher action researchers and identifies research underway to continue to ascertain the long-term effectiveness of the Moravian model of practitioner inquiry.

**Historical and philosophical foundations of a Moravian education**

Moravian College, the sixth oldest institution of higher education in the United States, traces its origin to the first girls’ boarding school in America, founded in 1742 by 16-year-old Benigna von Zinzendorf, daughter of the founder of the city of Bethlehem. Its distinguished reputation led George Washington, during his second term as President of the United States, to send a personal petition to the headmaster for the admission of his two grandnieces. In 1863, the Bethlehem Female Seminary as the school was then known and its male counterpart, the college and seminary of Nazareth Hall were each chartered to offer the baccalaureate degree. In 1954, the two institutions merged to form the coeducational Moravian College, which has one of the longest established teacher education programs of any Pennsylvania liberal arts college. In 2001, Moravian College initiated a new action research-based Master of Education degree program in Curriculum and Instruction.

Philosophically, the Moravian graduate education program is inspired by the 17th century Bishop of the Moravian Church, Jon Amos Comenius, generally regarded as the father of modern education, who wrote in his *Great Didactic* of 1649 that

> Our first wish is that all men should be educated fully to full humanity; not any one individual, nor a few nor even many, but all men together and singly, young and old, rich and poor, of high and of lowly birth, men and women – in a word, all whose fate it is to be born human beings: so that at last the whole of the human race may become educated, men of all ages, all conditions, both sexes and all nations (p. 97).
A statue of Comenius, gift to Moravian College from Charles University in Prague, stands watch in front of the 1891 landmark academic building Comenius Hall. Rededicated in 1991 by Václav Havel, then-President of Czechoslovakia, the statue today greets educators from eastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey as they make their way through the College’s entrance gates to study their teaching and their students’ learning through action research cycles conducted within and across courses. Moravian College’s Comenius Center is housed in Benigna Hall, honoring both the enduring legacy of Comenius and the extraordinary vision of the young woman who attempted to extend that legacy to colonial America. The campus statues and buildings honoring Comenius and Benigna serve as an ongoing reminder of Moravian College’s unique historical role as a bastion for universal education and social justice and have served as the backdrop to keynote lectures at Moravian’s annual action research conference and graduate education symposium delivered by contemporary social justice champions Jonathan Kozol, Bill Ayers, and Linda Christensen, among others.

**Moravian M.Ed. action research model and degree candidate response**

Infused throughout the action research curriculum is the aforementioned notion of universal education within a progressive, dialogic, and developmental framework. Through its curricular design, the Master of Education program is committed to using action research as a tool through which teachers and other school professionals may encounter an ongoing series of educative experiences.
and explore the primacy of education as freedom within a democratic society (Dewey 1938/1997). In its repudiation of a banking or transmission pedagogical model, the program intends to engage teacher-students and student-teachers in a dialogic invention and re-invention of knowledge through a process of critical consciousness, or conscientization (Freire 1970/2003). As teachers gather and analyze data collected within their classrooms, they examine the ways in which their instruction is within their students’ respective zones of proximal development as they explore inquiry-based approaches to learning, play, mediated instruction, and the role of a ‘more knowledgeable other’ (Vygotsky 1978).

Degree candidates complete four courses in Foundations of Action Research. In the first, Teacher as Inquirer, they explore how their many years as students, or what Lortie (1975/2002) calls their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ has impacted their current practice. Their autobiographical inquiry supports teachers in the articulation of their ontological belief system as they begin to conduct mini-inquiries into their professional practice and set a personal professional development agenda. In Contemporary Issues in Education, they work with a practicing schools superintendent or curriculum director to identify educational issues for study that are of personal, district-level, state, national, and/or international concern, leading to the construction of their first review of the literature on a contemporary self-selected issue. In Teacher as Researcher, candidates design and implement an action research study (Hendricks 2013; McNiff 2013), while engaging in classroom discourse analysis, figurative language analysis, and other forms of qualitative data analysis. Finally, in Teacher as Evaluator, they examine their own use of formative, summative, authentic, and portfolio assessment data within the context of common core standards.

Teachers explore their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1986) within four self-selected seminars in teaching and learning chosen from more than thirty courses, with concentrations available in literacy, mathematics, urban issues, educational leadership, special education, and English as a second language. Here teachers often begin the process of forming their own teacher inquiry support groups (Shosh and Zales 2005) as they examine the research base for teaching and learning within specific areas of interest, allowing them to engage in mini action research cycles as they move closer to the design and implementation of the capstone action research thesis project.

Four courses support degree candidates in the process of designing an action research study (Curriculum Development and Action Research), drafting a literature review (Conducting and Writing a Review of Educational Research), gathering and analyzing data (Reflective Practice Seminar), and writing and disseminating the research findings (Action Research Thesis). For a complete description of the curricular design, see Shosh and Zales (2007); Shosh (2012b).
Between 2003 and 2012, 144 certified public school teachers earned the Master of Education degree at Moravian College, documenting their teaching and their students’ learning in an action research thesis, which they defended in front of a panel comprised of Education Department faculty, local school administrators, and program alumni. These teachers, 86% of whom were women, ranged in age from 24 to 64 with a median age of 30 at the time of program completion. Slightly more than half taught students in grades 7-12 (ages 13–18), and 56% taught in urban schools. 73% were regular classroom teachers, 12% were special education teachers, and the rest taught art, music, and vocational education or held an administrative position. These teachers were employed by a total of 37 educational agencies, including 23 public school districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 8 public school districts in New Jersey, 3 Pennsylvania charter schools, 2 Pennsylvania private schools, a Pennsylvania intermediate unit, and the New Jersey Department of Corrections.

Printed copies of action research studies were bound and added to the Moravian College permanent collection in Reeves Library. Abstracts of all and pdf copies of most are available at http://home.moravian.edu/public/educ/eddept/mEd/thesis.htm. Studies ranged in length from 50 to 272 pages with a mean of 132 and a median of 128 pages. Studies also referenced on average 36 published sources, most of which were not action research publications. All studies included a statement of the teacher researcher’s stance, a narrative of teaching and learning with the presentation of contextualized data, and an average of nearly six key findings per study based upon the analysis of those data.

Figure 8.2. Teacher Melanie ‘Lisa’ DeSanctis (M.Ed. ’09) explains the type of inquiry-based challenge problems that she explored with her 4th grade (9 year old) students in her action research study. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZQrcbd0yWI
What did teachers opt to research? Fifty-seven studies focused on literacy instruction, including authentic reading and writing, student blogging to learn, reciprocal teaching, and literature circles. Seventeen studies examined some facet of mathematics involving constructivist problem solving approaches. Fifteen focused on history or civics, examining content area reading, primary source documents, journaling, and the use of instructional technology. Thirteen studies explored special or vocational education, including autism, mathematics problem solving in a special education context, and reading comprehension for special needs learners. Twelve studies examined teaching and learning in the visual arts, drama, or music. Ten focused on authentic language use and oral communication in modern world languages other than English. Seven studies focused on scientific inquiry. Six made inquiries into staff development, including teacher collaboration, use of technology, and the process of becoming a staff developer. Four examined instruction for English language learners with a focus on drama in education strategies, inquiry-based approaches to learning, modes of language use, and thematic units. Finally, three studies examined some component of school/classroom climate, including the use of class meetings, a school-wide behavior intervention program, and music in the regular education classroom.

The 144 teacher action research studies included 783 findings statements or themes. A qualitative coding of those statements indicated that more than half of these themes explained specifically what and how teachers took new action in their classrooms to lead to greater student achievement (33%) and engagement (20%). Additional themes related to collaboration (17%), challenges (12%), ownership (7%), instructional differentiation (6%), and metacognition (5%). A detailed analysis of the 104 findings statements from the 20 teacher action research studies conducted in 2011 revealed that to support student achievement, teachers provided clear, focused, and developmentally appropriate direct instruction; helped students to read required and self-selected texts in a variety of genres both actively and critically; and utilized a wide array of formative, summative, and authentic assessment devices.

In order to encourage active student engagement, teachers promoted student self-expression; allowed students to discuss and debate issues of personal and collective interest; promoted student inquiry and project-based learning; ensured that students encountered meaningful success that built confidence; and provided opportunities for students to work collaboratively in technology-rich instructional environments.

To develop collaboration among learners, teachers provided multiple opportunities for students to speak and listen to one another via small group and partnered classroom discussions, literature and Socratic circles, and electronic media like blogs and wikis, ensuring the development of a community of learners that extended beyond the classroom.
Challenges teachers faced and addressed in their action research studies included ineffective district-sanctioned programs and instructional materials, lack of student background knowledge to meet course and grade-level objectives, insufficient time to complete the required curricular sequence, increasingly low student self-efficacy and self-confidence as students proceeded through the intermediate-level and secondary school programs of study, and limited support for integrating the use of electronic learning technologies.

To promote student ownership, teachers provide self-directed learning opportunities; helped students make clear connections between in-school assignments and their out-of-school lives; provided meaningful choices for students to make within clearly established parameters; included opportunities for students to take on leadership roles and hold one another accountable for their learning.

For instructional differentiation, teachers identified prior knowledge; considered cultural and functional literacy; provided a multiplicity of ways for students to exhibit what they know and are able to do; and employed the concept of scaffolding in a variety of individual, small group, whole-class, and extra-curricular settings.

Facilitating student metacognition, teachers modeled how and why to self-monitor reading comprehension; helped students to set goals and monitor their progress in achieving those goals; and encouraged students to track their own growth in learning over time. For a more detailed discussion of the analysis of the 2011 thesis candidate data, see Shosh (2012b).

As data in Figure 8.3 reveal, program completers universally reported working hard in their action research based graduate education degree program. They clearly viewed themselves as trustworthy action researchers, whose ability to apply research-based findings to their own practice and to document that practice benefits their teaching and their students’ learning. While I have argued elsewhere (Shosh 2012b) that reflective practice cannot and should not be taught as simply another item to master within a technical rational paradigm, graduates of Moravian’s Master of Education program clearly view themselves as reflective practitioners. Teachers are proud of having worked hard to create new knowledge about what really works to support achievement and engagement in classrooms. As Rachel Sherman (M.Ed. ’12) and Jamie Hill (M.Ed. ’12) have explained to colleagues, ‘Action research at Moravian is all about real research for real teachers for real change.’

Re-invention of Moravian action research for the post-backpack generation

As the Moravian graduate education program enters its second decade of providing professional development that has a demonstrable impact upon
teaching and learning in classrooms, it must remain committed to its core values, while continuing to evolve to serve a new generation of teachers. In his blog post ‘Teaching the last backpack generation’, Zachary Walker reminds his readers that the last students who will need to carry backpacks to school are currently enrolled, and teachers need to begin preparing now for quite a different educational landscape that will be upon us in very short order. ‘I am excited about the possibilities of mobile learning but also concerned about the reluctance I see from teachers,’ he says. ‘Although the potential for educational technology is limitless, teachers must embrace the idea that mobile learning is not only here to stay but that it is important and powerful.’ To this end, he suggests that teachers must let go of their fear of failure, embrace creativity, and invite students to serve as co-teachers (2013). Barnett Berry, president of the Center for Teaching Quality, imagines the classroom of 2030 transformed by inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning, differentiated professional pathways that encourage excellent teachers to remain in the classroom, a hyper-connected world inside and outside the classroom, and what he calls a ‘teacherpreneurism’ that overcomes current educational bureaucracy.
A revised and updated action research-based graduate education curriculum must continue to focus on student achievement and engagement in multimodal environments where learning is educative and progressive (Dewey 1939), transactional (Rosenblatt 1995), dialogic and ethical (Freire 1998, 2000), constructed and mediated (Vygotsky 1978), and socially just (Christensen 2000, 2009; Ayers 2010; Kozol 2006, 2012; Delpit 2012). Moravian’s revised graduate education program must also continue to foster the transformation that occurs when teachers become teacher action researchers whose construction of knowledge leads them to become agents for systemic change (Shosh and Zales 2007).

Recognizing that teacher action research holds enormous promise for pre-service as well as in-service teachers demands the introduction of a new Master of Arts in teaching program to support the reflective practice development and knowledge construction of pre-professional as well as professional educators. Those who have not previously taught will best learn to teach by teaching in public schools as they learn to design and implement inquiry-based instruction mentored by master teachers who are alumni of the Master of Education program, while exploring in detail how to meet the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. The program will also work to extend its scope of influence, providing inquiry based professional development in the teaching of mathematics to teachers within the Allentown City Schools and serving as the professional development provider for Pennsylvania’s Keystone State Reading Association.

All graduate education candidates will continue to explore the foundations of action research in a newly redesigned foundational sequence of courses in which registrants begin to answer guiding questions that include:

1. How do I teach and learn in ways that allow student and teacher to co-construct knowledge that provides authentic answers to meaningful questions and leads to the posing of new questions?

2. How do I research teaching and learning of technologically-rich, inquiry-based learning environments and document evidence of student engagement and student achievement, ensuring that the voices of students, parents, school districts, communities, and other stakeholders are considered in my instructional decision-making?

3. How do I evaluate and assess student learning that honors a student’s right to her or his own language, beliefs, and knowledge generation (or Bakhtinian internally persuasive discourse) in dialogue with district-sanctioned curricula and Common Core standards (or Bakhtinian authoritative discourses)?
In its attempt to support teachers in answering the first essential question posed here, *Teacher as Inquirer* will build upon teachers’ autobiographical inquiry and support their development of inquiry-based lessons in their own classrooms as they explore digital storytelling and personal learning networks in the socially networked classroom. Extending this foundation, registrants in *Teacher as Researcher* will make their familiar classroom worlds objects of inquiry as they examine how to make thinking visible through an action research process that incorporates narrative inquiry (Ely 2007) and discourse analysis (Gee 2011). In *Teacher as Evaluator*, teachers will examine their own ontological and epistemological belief systems as they examine what counts as knowledge in the context of what the U.S. Common Core Standards articulate that students must know and be able to do and critiques of the standards movement.

Stand-alone courses in educational technology will be eliminated as all courses within the graduate education program, whether meeting in person, on-line, or in a blended format, will use such technologies in tandem with (rather than in addition to) the exploration of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 2002). As the graduate education program has evolved over its first ten years, the courses within this sequence have increasingly been used to acquire additional state-sanctioned certification as an English as a Second Language (ESL) program specialist, a principal, a supervisor of curriculum and instruction, and, beginning in the fall of 2013 (pending final approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education), a special educator.
The values and virtues of Moravian action research

The examination of research-based best practices within this sequence of courses has long supported the development of the inquiry-based question for exploration in the action research thesis. As a 2012 graduate explained, ‘I would not have found my thesis topic or my niche without this essential series of classes.’ A 2009 graduate concurred, explaining, ‘The 600 level courses were awesome! They were literature rich and the professors were incredibly knowledgeable in their areas of study.’ A 2010 graduate added, ‘In terms of making meaningful connections to my own teaching, the 600 level courses were most beneficial.’

Overwhelmingly, degree candidates point to the action research thesis as the most meaningful experience of their graduate studies and report that the sequence of courses supported them through the data collection, analysis, and write-up phases. As one 2012 program completer explained, ‘Each course was a natural progression for the final action research thesis. Being able to spread the work for all the pieces over the final year and a half of study was helpful and made the final writing relatively easy.’ As student exit data recommend, however, Contemporary Issues in Education (an introductory level course) will be removed and replaced by a mandatory rather than optional course in this sequence designed to support the writing of the literature review. More student comments for program improvement were allocated to this topic than any other, with multiple comments concurring with the 2012 graduate who stated, ‘The literature review stand alone course should be required or strongly recommended. The best choice I made was to take this course.’

Opportunities to extend the reach of Moravian action research

Going public with action research findings remains a program priority, and completed action research studies will continue to be bound and added to the library’s permanent collection and made available for posting on the program’s website. Adding an alumna or alumnus examiner to the thesis review panel has proven popular with both the teacher researchers, who appreciate both the teaching and researching expertise that alumni bring to the panel, and the alumni themselves, who appreciate the opportunity to mentor a colleague as they have been mentored by those who have gone before them. Expanded opportunities for students to attend a thesis defense presentation have proven popular, as have expanded post-defense opportunities to present the action research studies at Moravian’s annual Action Research Conference and Graduate Education Symposium. In 2012, a dozen recent alumni shared their thesis research at the University of San Diego’s School of Leadership and Education Sciences, home of the largest action research conference in
the United States, led by USD professor Lonnie Rowell. In 2013, six recent alumni presented their work at the inaugural Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference in San Francisco, and another half dozen shared their action research at the third international conference on Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research at York St John University.

To encourage the construction and dissemination of teacher research, Moravian is the second institution of higher education in the United States to join the European-based Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and will host CARN’s first east coast American Study Day in the spring of 2014, where teachers and researchers will spend a day visiting schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York City, where Moravian alumni are transforming instruction as a result of their action research efforts. Moravian College is also a sponsoring partner of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) and will serve as host site for ARNA’s 2014 conference. John Elliott spoke passionately in his 2012 Value and Virtue keynote address about the need for action research efforts to extend beyond teachers doing the master’s degree if action research is to fulfill its promise [see the Introduction to this book]. In drafting ARNA’s mission statement, to be ratified following its 2013 conference (see below), I have kept that advice in mind so that ARNA may provide an important meeting place for action researchers like those who graduate from Moravian’s program to have a network of colleagues with whom they may continue to share their knowledge construction and dissemination efforts:

The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) unites college and university students and faculty conducting practitioner inquiry into teaching and learning with fellow action researchers in public schools, private schools, community settings and workplaces throughout the Americas. ARNA members are committed to taking action locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally to promote action research that is conducted with a commitment to honesty, integrity, inclusiveness, multi-vocality, engagement, and achievement within sustainable democratic societies. (ARNA Mission Statement 2013)

The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA), the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), the Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research Conference and network, and the Moravian College Action Research Conference provide invaluable spaces within which practitioners may share the results of their inquiry. Recognizing and acting upon the 2012 motto ‘To Know Is Not Enough’, the American Educational Research Association’s Action Research Special Interest Group has been instrumental in supporting ARNA’s vision of developing a network of action research spaces throughout the western hemisphere to contribute to crucial worldwide efforts to empower practitioners to research their own practice. Following the lead of Margaret Riel’s M.A. in Educational Technology Program at Pepperdine University,
Moravian will endeavor to make its own action research conference sessions electronically available to action researchers around the world.

It is incumbent upon a program that espouses action research philosophy and methodology to continue to provide opportunities for its faculty to study systematically the impact of teaching and learning within the program. Joining me in the effort to document teaching and learning with the graduate education program are fellow Moravian alumni and graduate education clinical adjunct faculty Dr. Randy Ziegenfuss, who earned his M.A. in instructional technology from Columbia University and his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania and now serves as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Salisbury Township Schools; and Professor Michael Roth, doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, and Superintendent of Schools in Salisbury Township, located in a suburb of Allentown and featuring a curriculum that ‘supports student learning by providing opportunities for integration, application, individualization, co-teaching, and cross-curriculum project-based inquiry.’

Graduate education program research efforts currently underway include an examination of the researcher stance statements in which teacher researchers articulate their epistemological and ontological beliefs before gathering and analyzing data to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. Through their evolving understanding of their professional practice, teachers’ espoused values may come into direct conflict with the values of students, families, communities, and the large, urban school districts in which they work. In a summer 2013 seminar at York St. John University, I’ll explore how and why values conflicts lead to important new learning and more virtuous classroom actions as teachers analyze data through Deweyan, Freirean, Vygotskian, and other lenses.

During the summer of 2013, a research team including Brianne Schoolcraft ’15 and Brittany Wilczewski ’14, funded by a Moravian College Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR) grant, built upon the foundation laid by the summer 2012 SOAR research project ‘Teacher Action Research: Contemporary World Leaders and Their Epistemological Belief Systems’ to conduct a review of the literature exploring the ways in which action researchers acknowledge, problematize, and change their values, and core beliefs as a result of engaging in classroom research. The team read, coded, and analyzed the ‘Researcher Stance’ statements from the 159 action research studies conducted between 2003 and 2013 before generating an interview protocol and conducting digital video interviews with Moravian graduate education alumni.

Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (2007) consider a teacher research study to possess a high degree of dialogic validity only when the findings of the study are shared publicly and open to professional scrutiny and debate. John Elliott (2012) argues that if teacher action research is done only within the
confines of a teacher education or accreditation program, then action research is not fulfilling its wider and perhaps more important function of building a knowledge base of teaching by the teachers themselves. Currently underway is a study of fourteen recent Moravian graduate education program completers who opted to present their research at the 2012 University of San Diego Action Research Conference. These teachers completed a survey to explore the ways in which they went public with their action research data and findings through the College’s required sequence of courses and after their degree program was completed. A subset of teachers agreed to participate in a series of follow-up digital video interviews to elaborate upon the ways in which they opted and opted not to go public with their research findings.

All fourteen participants in this study found value in varying degrees to the guidance, questioning, data analysis, practical advice, accountability, feedback, new ideas, and emotional support that emerged from these interactions. All indicated, however, the importance of making their research studies fully downloadable and publicly available via the College’s web portal, explaining the importance of allowing the electronic documents to serve as models for fellow teacher researchers, to support other teachers in changes of practice, and to improve teaching and learning by adding to the professional knowledge base. Teachers felt intellectually challenged and validated, and gained confidence through the public sharing of their work in a campus presentation. Those who were able to present their work at the University of San Diego conference reported coming to a greater realization about the importance of their research and expressed a desire to continue developing expertise and adding to the professional research base on teaching and learning.

Conclusion

John Amos Comenius made a commitment to universal education at a time in world history when only the elite were educated. Benigna von Zinzendorf carried that belief with her to the New World and took action to ensure that all the children in the new community of Bethlehem would be educated in the best Moravian tradition. The school she founded in 1742 has blossomed in ways that she never could have imagined, but only relatively recently have teachers in the community been invited to explore their own values in dialogue with Comenius, Zinzendorf, Dewey, Freire, Vygotsky, Delpit, and others to inform their classroom practice.

Within their multiple action research cycles, Moravian’s graduate education students documented the actions they took that led to greater student achievement and engagement, collaboration, ownership, instructional differentiation, and metacognition within their classrooms. They embraced a constructivist model of teacher professional development and rejected
Levine’s ‘race to the bottom’. A 2012 program graduate summed up her experience:

The Moravian experience is top notch. I can’t say enough. If you want an easy pay raise and meaningless credits, go elsewhere. If you want to grow immensely as a teacher and person, this is the place to be.

To continue to provide meaningful graduate teacher education in a rapidly changing world, Moravian College must remain firmly committed to its values while expanding the opportunities it provides for teachers to engage in meaningful, technologically-rich, inquiry-based approaches to their own action research-based professional development. Enhanced opportunities to share their knowledge construction with other practitioners from around the world at the annual Moravian College Action Research Conference and through network partners like the AERA-SIG, ARNA, CARN, and Value & Virtue, will further empower teachers to improve teaching and learning and provide universal education in the spirit of Comenius and Benigna.

Commencement must truly be the beginning of each teacher’s action research efforts, and additional research is needed to document how program completers continue to be (or not to be) transformed by their graduate action research experience. Hence, further exploration of the transformation from teacher to teacher action researcher to teacher as agent for systemic change is necessary. A 2012 graduate concludes, ‘I left Moravian’s action research program not only with a degree, but also with a sense of pride in my work and what I accomplished. Public education as an institution is not okay right now, and we teachers are the ones who must change it.’

References


Elliott, J. (2012) ‘In what respects might educational action research be said to possess a spiritual dimension?’ Keynote presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research. York, UK, York St John University.


The values and virtues of Moravian action research


Virtuous education: divided no more

Julian Stern

When I was a schoolteacher, I never quite understood the division between the topic of the lesson and the behaviour of the class. Of course, I had the usual teacher concerns with behaviour, and occasionally dreamt I had lost control altogether. (Once or twice, the dreams came true.) But when I asked myself, ‘how can I improve the behaviour in the class?’, I also asked myself ‘what is the best way of helping people understand this topic?’ It would be nice to think that this was a consciously principled position. However, it was simply my own way of seeing myself as a teacher – a teacher, not a lion-tamer, not a baby-sitter, not a guard.

Now, when I go into classrooms, I usually sit at the back, observing trainee teachers. I am reminded of my years as a schoolteacher, as the form I am usually expected to fill in has one section on ‘subject knowledge’ and another on ‘behaviour’. Are they really separate? Of course not. I have seen teachers who have ‘well-behaved’ classes, where little learning has gone on. I have seen other teachers who get the pupils interested in a topic, excited and chatty and lively, such that an outsider might think ‘where’s the control, where’s the discipline?’ Well, the discipline, we might say, is in the discipline. The word ‘discipline’ is used in two ways, referring to ‘controlled and orderly behaviour’ and to ‘a branch of learning’ (SOED 2007). That is worth remembering when looking at ‘behaviour’ in classrooms. Good behaviour (good ‘discipline’) should always be driven by good learning (a good ‘discipline’, in the second sense). And the word ‘discipline’ itself comes from the Latin ‘to learn’. Those two separate worlds – of the topic of the lesson and the behaviour of the class – are brought together etymologically and in practice, through the focus on learning, and they are divided no more. How I saw myself as a teacher, I realised, does have deep and principled roots.

Parker Palmer writes of living ‘divided no more’. He says:

What I know about living a divided life starts with my training as an academic. I was taught to keep things in airtight compartments: to keep my ideas apart from my feelings, because ideas were reliable but feelings were not; to keep my theories apart from my actions, because the theory can be pure, but the action is always sullied.
For the teachers I meet around the country, the decision to live divided-no-more means teaching in a way that corresponds to the truth that they know, rather than according to the latest pedagogical fad or to whatever pressures the institution may be putting on them.

These are teachers, for example, who are integrating emotional work with cognitive work in the classroom. Certainly in higher education, there's a real taboo against doing that. (Palmer, interviewed in Lantieri 2001: 1)

This is not just an educational issue. He continues: ‘the divided life is not just an academic dilemma, it's a human dilemma’ (Palmer, interviewed in Lantieri 2001: 2). What had been a personal and individual puzzle – the need as a teacher to bring ‘knowledge’ and ‘behaviour’ into dialogue with each other – became a bigger issue, and one with a history. That history includes the terms ‘virtue’ and ‘value’, as both ‘virtue’ and ‘value’ tell us something about a person’s beliefs and something about a person’s actions and way of life. They are good trigger words for a more philosophical, or at least more philosophically sophisticated, version of my puzzle. In its more philosophical clothing, the puzzle is represented in the long-standing debates about ‘mind’ (thought, beliefs) and ‘body’ (behaviour, actions). The philosopher John Macmurray had a great interest in that debate. He was a philosopher who, like Palmer, wanted to live ‘divided no more’. Macmurray insists that action and thought are not separate, as action ‘includes thought’ (Macmurray 1996: 57). He continues:

Whereas in reflection we are engaged quite literally in changing our minds, in action we are engaged in changing the world. … The life of reflection is not a different life from the life of action. It is a limitation of the life of action to one of its aspects. This is why we contrast ideas and real things. (Macmurray 1996: 75)

The problem, Macmurray says, is with ‘dualism’, the division of the world into two quite distinct types of things. It is the dualism of thought and action, or mind and body, that is seen as most problematic. That dualism is best represented by Descartes, who said that we might doubt all kinds of things about bodies, but as we cannot doubt that we are thinking, we can say cogito ergo sum, I think therefore I am (Descartes 1912). For Macmurray, this attitude has its origin in a rather upper class Ancient Greek attitude to the difference between what we do in the physical world and how we think:

[Dualism] shifts the emphasis from action to thought, from practice to theory. Greek thought is fundamentally dualist. It distinguishes clearly between work and reflection, and makes reflection primary. Both Plato and Aristotle agree that the good life is the life of contemplation. So they do not think of God as the Creator, but as engaged in eternal contemplation. Man, likewise, is a thinker, not a worker. Labour is for lesser men, incapable of realizing the full possibilities of human existence. (Macmurray 1995: 56)
The views of the Ancient philosophers influenced modern philosophy and modern religion. Hence, the Greek influence on Christianity which transferred the emphasis, within Christianity, from practice to theory. Faith, which originally meant trust and confidence, came to mean a set of beliefs. Christians came to be people who professed certain beliefs. Christianity, aiming at the philosophic ideal, sought to become an organized system of doctrine. (Macmurray 1995: 57)

Throughout his writings, Macmurray tried to overcome these divisions – in philosophy and in religion – and his is a good example, therefore, of trying to live ‘divided no more’. I agree. I see many people who are interested just in beliefs, and getting the beliefs ‘right’. I see others who are more interested in behaviour and what people do in their lives. These positions are perfectly reasonable in themselves, but they are partial, they represent only one side of human life. What people believe does not simply sit in their heads, and what people do is not simply a physical action. People act thoughtfully.

This is all a background to my own interest in virtue and value, as both terms can help us live ‘divided no more’ by breaking down the dualism of mind vs body, or of thought vs action. There are other dualisms to be overcome. It is fascinating to read Bente Norbye, Odd Edvardsen and Anne-Lise Thoresen, when they discuss a more holistic view of health alongside a more integrated view of research and education, theory and practice, action and research. ‘Action research’ is more than just another way of finding out: it is a challenge, a political position, that says research is a form of (political) action in the world, and our actions, thoughtful as they are, can and should involve research.

Each form of dualism that we come across, we can try to overcome. Some people believe that an individual person can never fully reach beyond their own subjective world, and this can be expressed in the philosophy of existentialism. Existentialists often agree with Descartes, in coming to the ‘certainty’ of ‘I think, therefore I am’, but find themselves stuck there, unable to go beyond the ‘I’. How interesting, therefore, to see how hard it is in academic life simply to mention ‘I’. Hafþór Guðjónsson writes of the personal in research, the need to admit the ‘I’. Moving outwards from the ‘I’, there are forms of ‘we’ in good research. For Josephine Bleach these include families and local communities, for Lāsma Latsone and Linda Pavitola wider social and political communities. The whole attempt to overcome dualism is described by me as spiritual. Spirituality has many forms and descriptions, but each of them – I believe – is an attempt to overcome an apparent dualism (Stern 2009: 11 and see also the whole of chapter 1). John Elliott, too, describes educational action research as an activity of the spirit, overcoming as it does the dualisms of teacher and pupil, subjectivist and objectivist approaches to knowledge, and the attempt to separate schooling from broad political issues of justice. We live
our values and live our theories (McNiff 1993; Whitehead and McNiff 2006), and the working out of our lives and values is a process of learning, a process, with any luck, of research. Research is both ordinary – a form of learning, a ‘process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared’ (Hefce 2009, p 52) – and extraordinary, a thoughtful way of changing the world. Pip Bruce Ferguson writes of the influence of research, and, because research is a valuable – and value-laden – activity, she challenges us to work out whose values are embedded in the research.

Leaders are expected not only to ‘have’ values, but to embody those values for the people they lead. Aristotle described the ways in which leaders demonstrate their values. He called this ‘rhetoric’, the leader’s ‘art of influence and persuasion’ (Aristotle 1984: 2152, from his Rhetoric, and see also Stern 2013a), an art which shows people what real character – what virtues – the leader has, and thereby helps create the organisation’s ethos. Lesley Wood and Bruce Damons write of many of these same leadership virtues, with the values in the school reflecting the character of the leaders, and the leaders embodying their values. All teachers, of course, embody values, as Karen McArdle, Alison Hurrell, and Yolanda Muñoz Martinez explain. All students, too, with Joseph M. Shosh writing eloquently of his ‘inquiry-based, action research approach to teaching and learning’, itself also embodying much of the educational philosophy of Comenius, the 17th century Moravian educator.

Back to the start. When I was a schoolteacher, I never quite understood the division between the topic of the lesson and the behaviour of the class. Happily, today, I still don’t understand that division. I just think of it, now, as a stimulus to more virtuous education, and a helpmeet in understanding how research can be a particularly valuable form of learning, embedded in practice (Stern 2013b).

References


Index

action and reflection 125
action research: and self-reflection 51–2; as activity of the spirit 6–16; as ongoing processes 2; as political activism 3, 115, 126; community aspects 17–30; cycles of 20, 71; evidence base 2; for social justice 4; knowledge base 117; legitimation of 44–6; methodology 59, 71, 73; participatory form 19; relational aspects 52; theses 117
Alder, P.A. and Alder, P 23, 30
Amighetti, L. 96, 105
Anderson, G., Herr, K. and Nihlen, A. 119, 121
 apartheid 55
Arendt, H. 5
Argyris, C. and Schön, D. 38, 41
Aristotle 127
Attard, K. 9, 15
axiological model 90
axiology 81, 84
Ayers, W. 115, 121
backpack generation 114
Bakhtin, M. 115, 121
Bamber, J. et al. 18, 30
Bee, F. and Bee, R. 23, 30
Benner, P. et al. 72, 78
Berry, B. 114, 121
Bethere, D. and Mackevica, L. 95, 105
Birmingham, C. 86, 91
Bishop, R. et al. 38, 41
Blamey, A. and McKenzie, M. 17, 30
Blaxter, L. et al. 23, 30
Bleach, J. 3, 17–30, 126
Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. 59
Brighouse, H. 96, 98, 105
Bronfenbrenner, U. 17, 30, 95, 105
Bruce Ferguson, P. 3, 33–42
Bruner, J. 50–52, 98, 105
Burke, E. 40
Cairns, J. 98, 105
Campbell, E. 86, 91
Carr, D. 85, 87, 91
Chelimsy, E. and Shadish, W.R. 19, 30
Christensen, L. 115, 121
citizenship 4; different kinds of 94, 98; education 93
Citizenship Education at School (2005) 98, 105
civic responsibility 93, 96, 98; and values 96
Clotfelder, C. et al. 107, 122
Cohen, L. et al. 22, 30
Cole, M. 50, 52
Comenius, J. 108–9, 120, 122
communications outcomes 27–9; importance of 29: see also making public
community action research 17–30
Connelly, F.M. and Clandinin, D.J. 47, 53, 57
Cook, T. 28, 29, 30
Craig, C.J. 80, 91
criteria: for data gathering 81; for quality in research 33; for success 21, 25
cross-cultural practices 37
‘culture nation’ and ‘civic nation’ 97–8
Damons, B. 3, 54–68, 127
Darling-Hammond, L. 90, 107; et al. 54, 66, 107, 122
Darlington, Y. and Scott, D. 22, 25, 30
data: analysis of 25–7, 57, 83; collecting 22, 73, 76, 81; methods 22–25
Davies, I. 97, 105
Delpit, L. 115, 122
Descartes, R. 125
Dewey, J. 110, 115, 122
Dick, B. 57, 67
documentary evidence 24
Doyle, W. 79, 91
dualism 125–6
Dunne, J. 6, 8, 9, 10, 15

Early Learning Initiative 17–31
Edvardsen, O. 4, 69–78, 126
Elliott, J. 3, 6–16, 43, 71, 118, 119, 122, 126
Ely, M. 116, 122
epistemology: different forms of 33–4
European Commission (2005) 94, 103
evaluation: different forms of 19, 29;
importance of 25
Evans, M. 83, 91
Evidence-based programmes 17, 19;
need for 18, 30

Fenstermacher, G.D. 89, 91
Ferguson, B. and Ferguson, P. 37, 41
Fiske, E.B. and Ladd, H.F. 55, 67
Ford Teaching Project 13–15
Foucault, M. 37
Freire, P. 37, 98, 115, 122

Gee, J.P. 116
Gisladottir, K.R. 44, 53
Glasser, W. 62, 67
Goe, L. et al. 107, 122
‘good’ teachers 79, 85, 87
Goodson, I.F. 79, 91
Gottlieb, K. and Robinson, G. 93, 105
Greenhalgh, A. 80, 91
Greenwood, J. and Te Aika, L. 37, 41
Grove, R. 56, 67
Gudjonsson, H. 3, 42–53, 126
Gundara, J. 104, 105

Harrison, L. and Kagan, J. 96, 105
Harrington, C. 13, 15
healthcare delivery 70; organisation of 71
Hefce (2009) 2, 5, 127
Heikkinen, V. 79, 91
Heikkinen, H. et al. (2012) 8, 9, 15, 55
Hendricks, C. 110, 122
Herr, K. and Anderson, L. 27, 30, 57
HIV and Aids 55
Hogan, P. 6, 10, 11, 12, 15
Hohepa-Watena, T. 37, 41
Horsdal, M. 95, 98, 106
Hurrell, A. 79–92, 127
identity 70, 80; see also stories
Ijabs, I. 98, 106
impact 18, 22, 23
influencing policy 28
interviews 24
Jaura, D. and Kusnierik, J. 97, 106
Kagan, J. 96, 106
Kears, S. 9, 15
Kellam, S.J. and Langevin, D.J. 28, 30
Kemmis, S. 17, 30; and McTaggart, R. 22, 30
Kjartansdottir, E. 45–7, 53
Kjartansdottir, H. 49–50, 53
knowledge: as collective creation 33;
different kinds of 70, 116; need for integration with practice 70–1, 73, 86
Koerner, M. and O’Connell, F. 90, 91
Korsgaard, O. et al. 94, 103, 106
Korthagen, F. and Kessels, J. 86, 89, 91
Koshy, V. 21, 23, 24, 30
Kosol, J. 115, 122
Lantieri, L. 125, 127
Latsone, L. 4, 93–106, 126
Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 71
leadership: transformational 54; values-based 54–5; virtuous 54, 58–66
Levine, A. 107, 121–2
Lewin, K. 20, 30, 71
Lickona, T. 96, 106
Lieblich, A. et al. 80, 83, 92
Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. 76, 78
Lombardo, T. 56, 67
Lortie, D. 110, 122
MacIntyre, A. 6, 8, 9, 10, 15
Macmurray, J. 125–8
making public 117
Martínez, Y.M. 79–92, 127
Mayne, J. 20, 30
McArdle, K. 79–92, 127
McGarvey, C. 59
McKernan, J. 23
Medical Research Council (MRC) 17, 22, 27–8, 31
Mercer, N. 50, 53
midwifery project 74–6
Molander, B. 71, 78
Moravian College 4, 107–122
Motschekga, A. 55, 67
Mounter, J. 57, 67
Muijs, D. 79, 92
Murdoch, I. 10
narratives: first and second order 8–9; importance of 47
Narrative Inquiry 57, 80–1
narrative turn 8
National College of Ireland 17
Navickas, A. 97
Neuman, W.L. 23, 31
Niemi, R. and Finkel, S. 96
Norbye, B. 4, 69–78, 126
November, I. et al. 55
nursing: practices 70; supervision of 73
observations 23
Önundardóttir, E. 48–9, 53
Osler, A. and Starkey, H. 94, 103
outcomes and implications 27
Palmer, P. 124–5
Parekh, B. 94
Patton, M.Q. 20, 22, 27, 31; and Horton, D. 28, 31
Pavitola, L. 4, 93–106, 126
PCHP (Parent Child Home Programme) 18–19, 25–26
pedagogy: defining it 85; different kinds of 110; improving it 79
Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) 32–3, 35–40
performance indicators 22, 25
Perumal, J. 55, 67
Piggot-Irvine, E. 39, 54, 67
policy contexts: influencing them 2, 28
Polkinghorne, D.E. 83, 92
power relations 77
public sphere 28–9
questionnaires: as evaluation methods 23
Research Assessment Exercise 32
research-based practice 70
research: developing capacity in 70; groups 70, 72; for knowledge creation 2
Reynolds, S. and Valentine, D. 94
research methodologies 2
Richardson, L. 46, 53
Ricoeur, P. 76
Riel, M. 118
Riessman, C.K. 80, 92
Roberts, B. 80, 92
Robson, C. 23, 31
Rosenblatt, L. 115, 122
Rossi, P.H. et al. 28, 31
Rowell, L. 118
Roza, M. and Miller, R. 107, 122
scholarship, new forms of 51–2
Schön, D. 27, 29, 31, 71
Senge, P. and Scharmer, O. 17–20, 27–9, 31
Share, M. et al. 19, 22, 24–6, 31
Shosh, J. 4, 107–123, 127; and Zales, C. 110, 115, 122–3
Shulman, L. 110, 116, 123
Simpson, M. and Tuson, J. 23, 31
Smith, A. and Bruce Ferguson, P. 34, 41
social justice 37, 56, 126
social practices 8–9
132 Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research

social transformation 1, 4
spirituality 7-9
Stenhouse, L. 2, 5
Stern, J. 1, 4, 124–8
stories: as identity formation 80; as means of learning 116; constellations of 80
Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. 20, 25, 31
Stringer, E. 59
Sumison, J. 90, 92
Sund College 44, 49
Swanton, C. 35, 42
Talbot, M. 96, 98
Tawhai, V., Pihera, K. and Bruce Ferguson, P. 34, 42
Taylor, C. 7, 10, 16; and Ryan, C. 54, 68
teacherpreneurism 114
teachers: as agents 115; their lives 80
teaching: as a social practice 3, 11;
choreography of 13; heartwork of 6, 12
theory out of practice 21
theory–practice gap 71
Thoresen, A.-L. 4, 69–78, 126
triangulation 23
Tuohy, D. 17, 32

validity 57; testing 74, 83
Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research: as a research programme 2;
as criteria and standards 61; beginnings of Project 1; Conference 35, 40
values: and ethics 96; and virtues 56;
articulating them 2, 37, 39, 60; as self-therapy 8; conflicts of 3, 34–6; into practice 60, 65–6, 86, 105; transmitting them 96
Van der Westhuizen, P. and Van Vuuren, H. 54, 68
Van Manen, M. 85, 86, 92
Veenstra, P. 35, 36, 42
Veerman, J.W. and van Yperen, T.A. 18, 21–2, 25, 29, 31
virtues: confluence of 87; living them 2
voices of practitioners 4, 28, 46–7, 87
Vygotsky, L.S. 110, 115, 123
Walker, Z. 114, 123
Walters, P. 97
Web Research 34, 42
White, P. and Grice, J. 35, 42
Whitehead, J. 40, 42, 56, 58; and McNiff 127–8
Wilson, S. 57, 68
Winter, R. 83, 92
Wood, L. 3, 54–68, 127
writing: academic traditions in 46; as a form of enquiry 46; disseminating through 43
Zuber-Skerritt, O. 62, 63, 66