

Making public my embodied knowledge as an educational psychologist in the enquiry, How can (do) I improve my practice as a Senior Educational Psychologist?

Marie Huxtable 5th Sept 06 marie_huxtable@bathnes.gov.uk

Abstract

Over the years I have tried to develop a framing for my activities as an educational psychologist (Levey et al 1986, Huxtable 2003, Huxtable 2005) that are consistent with the creation of educational theories that can explain educational influences in learning (Whitehead 1993).

As a senior educational psychologist and practitioner-researcher I am researching my co-ordination of the Local Authority's APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities Project) in order to generate knowledge of educational environments in which it can flourish. I am, through this process, recognizing that I am seeking to extend my understanding and practice of educational psychology which contributes to that aspiration.

I have found the traditional approaches to evaluating my work at best inappropriate and at worst destructive and I have searched for ways of evaluating my effectiveness against standards which contribute to the progress of my understanding and practice and enable me to hold myself publicly accountable. This is relevant to current discussions on assessing quality in applied and practice-based research (Furlong and Oancea 2005)

Focus of enquiry;

In the process of contributing to the development of a culture which supports children learning to live satisfying and productive lives, my focus is on making explicit the values, skills and understandings that emerge through the enquiry; these values form my living standards of inclusionality. Because this research into my professional practice is contextualised within the policy making implementation and evaluation of a Local Authority I will be analysing the educational influences of the policy making, implementation and evaluation processes. In particular I will connect with the DFES Excellence and Enjoyment (2003) Primary Strategy Principles of Learning and Teaching. My analysis will include an account of my own educational influence in living these principles of learning and teaching.

To improve my practice as an educational psychologist I must deepen my understanding of what it is that promotes and supports the sort of learning that I believe is transformational, that contributes to rather than negates a young person's understanding of themselves as creators of knowledge, their living values, what it is that gives meaning and purpose to their lives, their embodied educational theories and how they influence them in gaining the skills and understandings to live a satisfying, productive and meaningful life. Through this living theory action research I am seeking to extend and create new understandings of educational psychology and inclusional values as standards of judgement by which I can hold myself to account. As a senior I have an opportunity to contribute at a strategic as well as operational level.

Introduction

I understand who, what and how I am as a person to be inextricably interwoven with my experiences of, and interrelationship with, my world. I am the only person who can and does live my life while I acknowledge other people influence me as I influence them. I believe other people are the same, in that sense, as me.

'Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In those choices lies our growth and our happiness.'
(Covey 2004 p. 43).

Through my professional life in education I seek to enable children to extend their space for choice and the possibilities they have of living satisfying productive lives to their own and societies benefit.

So, I find people unique, and delightfully complicated creators of their own learning, and that they are far more than the sum of their parts.

Over the years of working as an educational psychologist I have experienced increasing tensions between working with the knowledge emanating from my field and practices which values systematic, rather than systemic ways of knowing, decontextualises learning, imposes an understanding of a person on them, and denies them as creators of valued knowledge and their own learning. Through researching my present practice, coordinating the APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities) project my understanding of what educational psychology is and how I can practice more meaningfully and productively as an educational psychologist, has shifted. I would like, through this paper, to share with you some of my thinking and ask whether you can see evidence of some of the understandings I am beginning to make, and whether it contributes to your own thinking as an educator.

I am not claiming a universal truth; to do so would be to work solely within the traditional forms of Aristotelian or dialectical epistemologies. I am trying to offer you the

dawning of my understandings, coming from a growing understanding of living theory¹ and inclusionality² which are informing a new inclusional epistemology. I am excited by the transformations in my practice and the possibilities I can see of being able to contribute more fully to the vision of the authority expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan 2005:

"We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this"

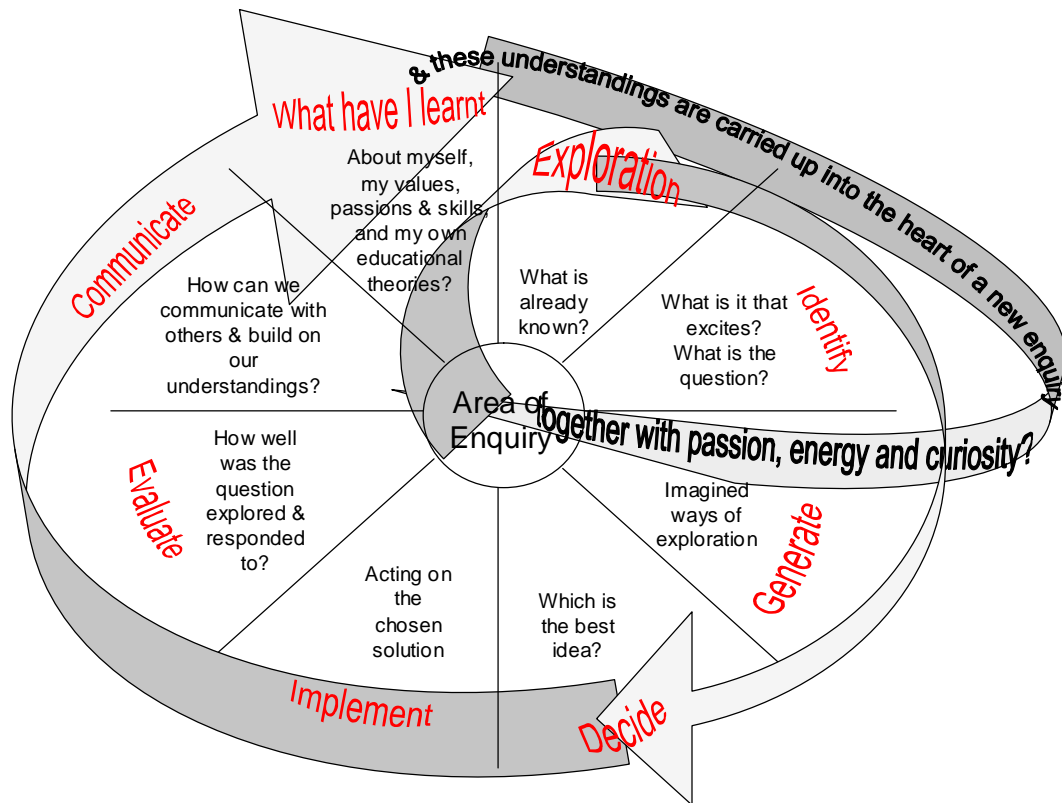
As I begin to research answers to the question which forms my doctoral research proposal:

How can I help children and young people learn to live satisfying and productive lives through my professional practice as a senior educational psychologist?

I wish to give a frame to my story that is both comprehensible to you and is consistent with one that is being used with the youngest learners in my local authority. I have therefore used a framework that connects Belle Wallace's TASC cycle (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) (Chandler and Wallace (2004),) and Jack Whitehead's (1993) work on living values and educational theories into a flowing 3 dimensional knot form rather than a closed circle.

¹ These theories are living in the sense that they are our theories of practice, generated from within our living practices, our present best thinking that incorporates yesterday into today, and which holds tomorrow already within itself" Whitehead and McNiff 2006 p3

² Inclusionality is an awareness of space and boundaries that is connective, reflective and co-creative. Jack Whitehead's summary based on Rayner (2005)



As you read I ask you to do so with your educational values in sharp focus, to maintain a focus beyond the detail of what I have written (to 'see' the picture in a 'magic-eye picture', you must maintain a point of soft focus beyond the page in order to see what is on it. Claxton and Lucas 2004 p61), engage with the whole beyond the sum of its parts, and from that place explore the detail.

As I write I am caught on the horns of a dilemma (a very emotionally painful place to be). I believe that I have grown through my practice to a better understanding of what it is for me to work more productively as an educational psychologist yet it also feels to be arrogant for me to say I have something of value to offer you; I don't know what you value and where you have got to in your own thinking and practice. The best way I can resolve this at present is to offer you something of my own journey and ask you at the end to say whether I have communicated some of my embodied knowledge as an educational psychologist in a way that is useful to you.

Exploration – the contexts and background to the question and enquiry

In this section I want to introduce you to some of the contradictions I have experienced through my practice as an educational psychologist and through the policies and strategies in which my work is located.

My life as an educational psychologist in 60 seconds

I am just starting my 30th year as an educational psychologist and am employed as a senior educational psychologist working for a local authority coordinating APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities Project). In 'able pupils' I am working with an inclusive and inclusional understanding of 'able pupils' as might be indicated by this quote from Dweck

...intelligence is portrayed as something that can be increased through one's efforts. (Bandura & Dweck, 1985; Dweck & Leggett, 1988 in Dweck 2000p3

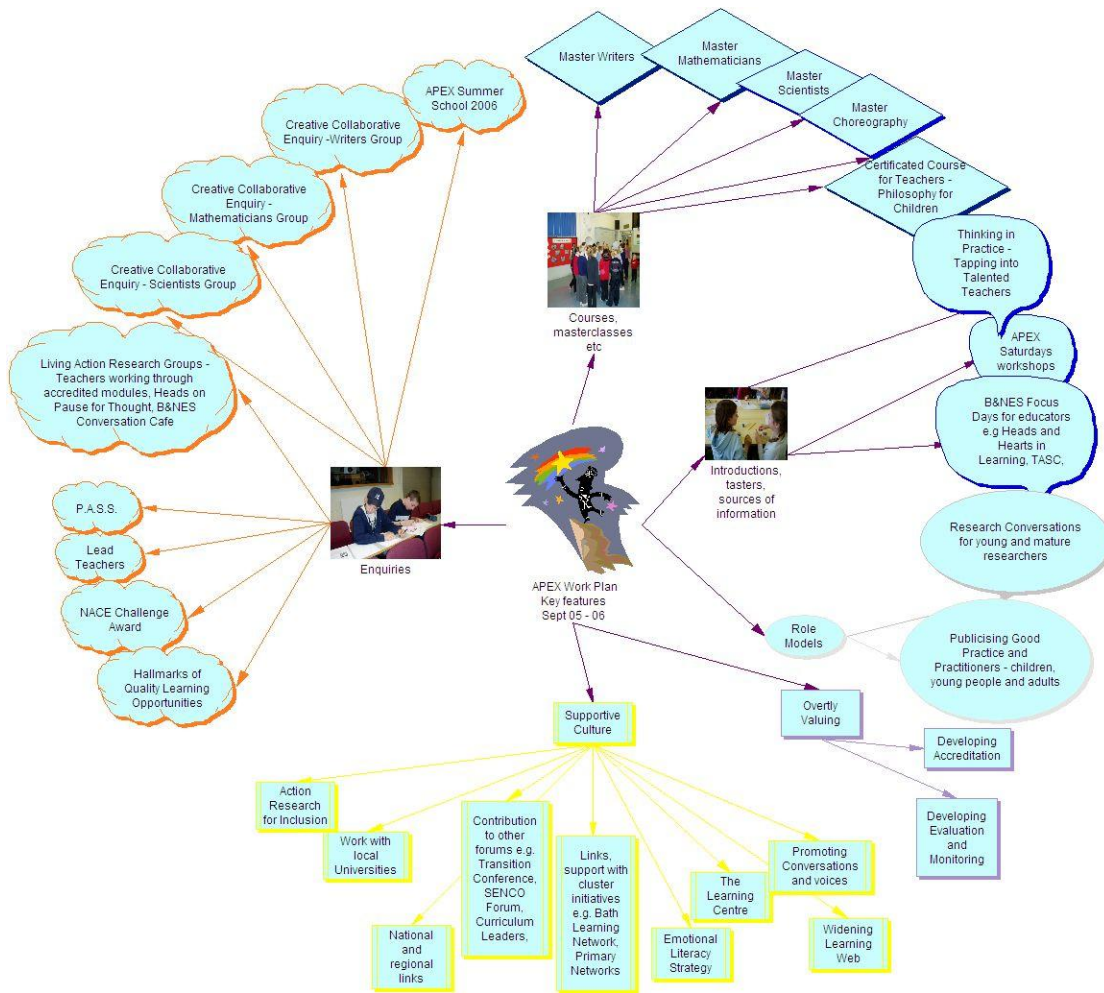
Or this one by a pupil in Chew Stoke Primary School

'I have learnt to never underestimate my skills of craft and learning, because nothing is impossible to a child with imagination.' (Learning evaluation by R. aged 10)

I hold to the belief that all learners have the capacity for extraordinary achievement and I have sought to develop my practice to reflect my growing understanding of what I mean by extraordinary achievement and how I can contribute to the educational environment in which it can flourish. I will return to this later.

You can get a flavour of the range of activities the project embraces from a picture of my work plan. Although the activities are represented discretely with neat straight arrows projecting out from a centre, with only simple unidirectional and uni-dimensional connections, I would ask you to engage your imagination and 'see' the connections as being open, fluid and multidimensional with the different activities being distinct but not discrete³. They are being created and reviewed within the framework that has evolved through practice influenced by the theories of people such as Renzulli, Sternberg, Gardner, Adey, Freeman, Wallace, Whitehead, Rayner and now Dweck. This is not intended as a list of the 'good and the great' it is to acknowledge some of those I have drawn most extensively on over the recent years and to give you a flavour of the thinking and psychology I am attracted by.

³ 'distinct but not discrete' a wonderful phrase I learnt from Alan Rayner



When I say I am an educational psychologist I know that there are preconceptions of what I do and what I understand as good practice. I am no longer involved with ‘special needs’ nor do I work for the school psychology service.

When I started this description might have served to describe what I thought I was doing:

...applying psychological theories, research and techniques to help children and young people who may have learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems. (based on the Association of Educational Psychologists definition of Educational Psychology)

Through writing this paper I now understand and research my practice as a senior educational psychologist:

‘... working within the education system with the educational intent of engaging with others to generate and research their own living educational psychological theories, so we might each influence our own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we live and work’

I am currently understanding educational psychology as:-

‘comprising a living body of knowledge, skills, understandings and values concerning how, why, when, where and what humans learn, expressed and researched with an educational intent through the generation of living educational theories and practice.’

My meaning of ‘educational intent’ is communicated through phrases such as:-

‘I want to enable children and young people to build an understanding of what they want to commit time and effort to during their lifetimes that will enable them to live satisfying and productive lives without imposing my own values and needs.’

‘I want to extend the variety of educational contexts in which children can learn about their own living values that they hold as their standards of what is or is not a satisfying and productive life and enabling them to increasingly understand their own embodied living educational theories so they can take control over themselves and the destinies they want to create in a world they want to live in.’

‘I want them to learn skills, understandings and values which will enable them to do this with increasing independence.’

To learn requires me to theorise about what I do, to check whether I am actually doing what I think I am doing, to speculate as to how I might connect my current learning to improve my practice, to act and reflect. While these sound like discrete stages that happen sequentially, in practice I have found they often happen in a creative flow form which many theories drawn from psychology appear to deny. Without holding theory and practice together at the same time I can not see how I can improve i.e. learn; I have no way of recognising success or failure, no way of directing change. I am forever instructor dependent as a ‘learner’ or a deliverer of strategies as a ‘practitioner’, jumping from implementing one directive or ‘lunch box’ to another, without being able to connect to my embodied educational theories or values generatively.

As an educational professional I feel a responsibility to contribute not only to my own learning but also to the living body of educational knowledge with the intention of improving the educational culture in which children and young people grow up. This means I must make my work public; I must communicate to others. From the work I have

done previously writing within the TASC framework and connecting it with living values and living educational theory research I would add 2 further steps to the familiar action research 'cycle; communicating *with* others and reflecting, not only on skills and understandings, but also what I have learnt about myself, my living values, and my own living educational theories.

Snow's challenge stands as much for me as an educational psychologist as it does for teachers:

"The challenge is to enhance the value of personal knowledge and personal experience for practice. Good teachers possess a wealth of knowledge about teaching that cannot currently be drawn upon effectively in the preparation of novice teachers or in debates about practice. The challenge here is not to ignore or downplay this personal knowledge, but to elevate it. The knowledge resources of excellent teachers constitute a rich resource, but one that is largely untapped because we have no procedures for systematizing it. Systematizing would require procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public, for connecting it to bodies of knowledge established through other methods, and for vetting it for correctness and consistency. If we had agreed-upon procedures for transforming knowledge based on personal experiences of practice into 'public' knowledge, analogous to the way a researcher's private knowledge is made public through peer-review and publication, the advantages would be great (Snow 2001)

I need to remind myself that such procedures enable communication of knowledge, they describe vehicles for communication, they do not describe journeys of knowledge creation. I have made what I now think was a mistake, of confusing a vehicle of communicating with the knowledge created for years as an educational psychologist. For instance, Bloom(1956) devised a taxonomy of educational objectives especially intended to help various professionals: teachers, administrators... dealing with curricular and evaluation problems with greater precision; in other words as an aid to communication by those variously involved with the school and education system about the perceived sophistication of thinking expressed by students. This was translated as a hierarchy of how people learn, which was then translated into a hierarchy of teaching procedures to be followed from bottom to top. This is an example of the traditions of educational psychology that I have grown from. I find Blooms work stimulating but I now believe that I make different meaning of his work coming from an inclusional living theory epistemology. I can use his taxonomy to share a communication about what I mean by 'higher order thinking', I can understand how some questions are likely to elicit more or less sophistication in the articulation of a response. What I can not do is use it as a hierarchy to determine the order in which someone will learn; I have never found learning, of even the simplest of skills, to proceed in such a lock step fashion, not even when a skip and a jump are introduced.

To return to my chronology; there was no sharp move for me from the role of school psychologist to my current position but a gradual one that came from a shift in my focus on what children couldn't do and the worries and concerns that surround them, to an

increasing fascination with what takes people forwards to realise their dreams and contribute as fully as they are able, to a society they and I want to live in. I do not deny or belittle the problems they face, nor imply that specific learning programmes or help should not be made available, but I have come to believe that problems and their resolutions should be self defined within the experience and intentions of the individual and not imposed by others within their terms of reference. I seek to contribute as meaningfully as possible to a child's life as a responsible adult and professional educator while acknowledging that the individual is the only one who can create their own learning. Having just written this I realise what a change there has been in my thinking over the years, which has emerged through researching my practice through this paper.

When I started working as an educational psychologist my work was concerned with referrals, special school placement and remediation engaging with concepts and practice connected with words such as abnormalities, subnormalities, disabilities, special needs, difficulties and problems. I use the language specifically to reflect the change in cultural thinking and find it interesting that some terms now make me feel embarrassed and provoke a desire to say 'I do not want to cause offence' or apologise for some of what I did, which had at its source the same desire as now: to enable children to learn to live satisfying and productive lives.

The 70's saw the move for all children to be the responsibility of the education system. Just before I started my career the placement of children into special schooling had been the responsibility of the health services. The 70's also saw the implication of labelling theory explored. Warnock described special educational needs as something you had not something you were, but it was still a category, although it hovered between a statistically defined one and one that was criterion referenced. I have practiced through the rise and fall of the comprehensive school, the demise of fully funded higher education for all, and the enshrinement of 'rights' in legislation which are pursued through litigation, and a move to inclusive education with a focus on social rather than medical models.

I would like to set the current context of 'gifted and talented' alongside this very swift and selective gallop through the educational world that I have lived in. My interest in the notion of 'intelligence' started during my first degree in Hull where I argued vehemently against the racist and determinist views of people such as Eysenk and Jensen. When I began work as a psychologist in a Child Guidance and School Psychology Service I struggled against the common practice of using IQ tests to describe the current needs of an individual or to allocate children to education programmes. Gould (1981) reflects a lot of my feelings in the *Mismeasurement of Man*. Gipps (1994) also describes the inadvertent damage that can be done by the inappropriate use of measurement to hold education services to account.

In my practice you could, and still can, see the influences of those such as Ainscow and Tweddle's work on objectives based teaching, Gagne's ideas on instructional design, Haring's hierarchy of learning, Bereiter and Englemann with direct instruction. I sought to move from working with children to working with educators and systems as can be seen in the papers on service delivery (Knapman, Huxtable, Tempest 1987) I experienced

increasing tension between wanting to help children have better educational experiences in educational environments, recognising that the child was in control of their own learning, what 'worked' for one didn't necessarily 'work' for another, and that I was working with theories and systems that gave children problems and in effect denied my educational intent and the psychological theories I was creating, even if not articulating. An example of the tension between trying to work with the traditional discipline of psychology and my embodied theories can be seen when I started and abandoned a research degree 20 years ago. I found the use of traditional experimental design, matched groups, sampling and parametrics did not allow me to explore meaningfully the question I had then about the interrelationship of the embodied knowledge and practice of the teachers with the performance of their pupils.

In the 90's I began to discover the area of high ability and found the delights of re-engaging with *educational*⁴ psychology in practice; what relevance has notions of high ability to improving educational provision, what can be done to help children achieve, how do people learn with greatest effect, what can be done to increase the chances of children growing towards being successful adults, how do we understand success...? These and so many more questions filled me with optimism. When I enquired I found many schools and teachers were also beginning to want to shift from a major focus on 'special needs' and problems, to looking at what children could do well, how to feed their aspirations and help them realise high ambitions to their own benefit and that of society.

The issues faced through my career with 'special needs' are now being revisited with the governments interest in 'the other end' and can be seen in the language and procedures offered by the DFES in various strategies; 'gifted and talented children', identification, registers, special programmes of study...Transpose the pre 70's education language to that of the current day – abnormal to exceptional, subnormal to extraordinary, disability to high ability and you find the same concept of measurement through an ordinal ratio scale and misinterpreting correlations as causal relationships, with the intention of quantifying education and categorising children.

Throughout the literature and in education policy and educational practice can be seen a continual tug between what historically has been described as the 'nature, nurture' debate about intelligence. I have little interest in engaging in this debate. What I find of more interest is the impact of those theories as embodied in educators, policy makers and learners. Dweck (2000) in her book on Self-Theory spells out two ways that educators and learners can understand intelligence and the implications;

Some people believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait. They have a certain amount of it and that's that. We call this an 'entity theory' of intelligence because intelligence is portrayed as an entity that dwells within us and that we cant change. (Bandura & Dweck, 1985; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) P2

⁴ I appreciate the distinction between education and educational that Whitehead (1993) makes. For me the former relates to the system/organisation of schooling/education the later is a concept which embraces values that are very important to me – I will try to use the two words consistently but in practice they are often randomly interchanged

Other people have a very different definition of intelligence. For them intelligence is not a fixed trait that they simply possess, but something they can cultivate through learning. We call this an 'incremental theory' of intelligence because intelligence is portrayed as something that can be increased through one's efforts. (Bandura & Dweck, 1985; Dweck & Leggett, 1988)

It's not that people holding this theory deny that there are differences among people in how much they know or in how quickly they master certain things at present. It's just that they focus on the idea that everyone, with effort and guidance, can increase their intellectual abilities (Mueller & Dweck, 1997; see Binet 1909-1973) p3

Contradictions within policies and strategies

Consider the language of documents such as Excellence and Enjoyment where I experience the tensions of these two conceptual frameworks that do not sit easily together.

Learning must be focused on individual pupils' needs and abilities p4

...in providing a tailored approach to support children with special educational needs, gifted and talented children, and groups whose needs may not have been properly addressed in the past – such as those from minority ethnic groups.p5

The first is focused on the learning and the relationship of it with the context that the individual is bringing to it; I choose to understand needs and abilities within Dweck's incremental theory and constructed by the child within a social context. Within the second phrase the confusion is clear; there is the implication that educators should be supporting children with 'special needs' that are understood within a school context (although not necessarily within an individual's constructs), and children can at various times have difficulties which they can be taught to overcome given appropriate help which contrasts with the categorisation of *children* as 'gifted and talented', not their learning, by a statistical definition. This is further confused when schools are told to identify 10-15 percent of their pupils as 'gifted and talented', with $\frac{2}{3}$ rd gifted and $\frac{1}{3}$ rd talented.

Outstanding primary schools ...1.3. In these schools, children are engaged by learning that develops and stretches them and excites their imagination. They enjoy the richness of their learning – not just learning different things, but learning in many different ways: out-of-doors, through play, in small groups, through art, music and sport, from each other, from adults other than teachers, before school, after school, with their parents and grandparents, formally and informally, by listening, by watching, and by doing. They develop socially and emotionally. They take pride in their learning and want to do well.p6

This section which clearly reflects an incremental theory of intelligence and the learner constructing their own learning with educational implications, stands in contrast with the section where children are defined as ‘gifted and talented’, and here the category is redefined in relation to a national not local cohort:

4.10. National support for gifted and talented children includes the national summer schools programme, World Class Arena, the optional teacher assessment tasks replacing extension tests, and our pilots of advanced learning centres. We expect the Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth to offer primary programmes from 2004-05, and in London, GATE A (the gifted and talented education arm of the London Challenge), will offer regional support across all 33 LEAs. P32

The examples drawn here from the Excellence and Enjoyment document are illustrative of the tensions that are unresolved throughout education policy and within which I must be able to demonstrate I am contributing to progressing practice which reflects more of an educational intent as described in this section:

Good learning and teaching should:

- v **Ensure every child succeeds:** provide an inclusive education within a culture of high expectations.
- v **Build on what learners already know:** structure and pace teaching so that students know what is to be learnt, how and why.
- v **Make learning vivid and real:** develop understanding through enquiry, creativity, e-learning and group problem solving.
- v **Make learning an enjoyable and challenging experience:** stimulate learning through matching teaching techniques and strategies to a range of learning styles.
- v **Enrich the learning experience:** build learning skills across the curriculum.
- v **Promote assessment for learning:** make children partners in their learning. P25

Prevailing theories and received wisdoms are all stories told well, by people. They are used by many other people to give an explanation for their learning and are often used as justification for their actions. There is one step further on – the ability to tell a story powerfully; to communicate in a way that contributes to the transformation of cultures within which education and educational theories and practices are nurtured or denied. Jack Whitehead puts the cautious note eloquently when he talks of ‘the truth of power rather than the power of truth’. The prevailing stories are powerful stories, which sometimes carry the truth of power well past the power of truth they originally held. I would like to be able to tell my story well and powerfully; retaining my commitment to the ‘power of truth’.

Susan Hart shows what I mean in Learning without Limits .

There is an alternative, a second kind of learning, which in this book we are calling ‘learning without limits’. This is learning that is free from the needless constraints imposed by ability-focused practices, free from the indignity of being labelled top, middle or bottom, fast or slow, free from the wounding consciousness of being treated as someone who can aspire at best to only limited achievements. Learning without limits becomes possible when young people’s school experiences are not organised and structured on the basis of judgements of ability. (Hart et al 2004 p3)

For the 29 years of my professional life as an educational psychologist I have implemented, with increasing dissatisfaction, the generalising theories that come from psychology through discrete individual, target based remediation programmes. Through the intervention programmes I have often unintentionally confirmed a child’s view that they are a problem (I am a poor reader), the focus of the intervention defines them (I am dyslexic) and they have learnt what else they can’t do (become an author). Now with children placed on a ‘gifted and talented register’ schools are exhorted to provide particular programmes of study. It is not enough that we are yet again labelling children they have to engage with a special programme which, by its very existence, problematises their comparatively swift acquisition of a discrete set of skills. The child becomes the problem - they can not make as much progress as they could/should without *special* intervention, being identified for intervention defines them as gifted and talented – for as long as they are on the register (as soon as they are removed they become by default ‘not gifted and talented’), and they have learnt what they can’t do (become anything that does not carry social status or continue reaching the targets set for them)

This grates very badly with what I believe about the way people learn and why I work as an educational psychologist. The traditional approach of taking theory, dis-assembling, focussing on the discrete bits, replication, monitoring and evaluating through parametric statistics is the equivalent of sticking wings on a caterpillar – you don’t get a more beautiful butterfly just a dysfunctional caterpillar⁵. That is where I lose contact with theorists whose work continues to be hugely influential with me; when it gets turned into a package. It is in the creation of the ‘recipes’ that the learning lays not in following them.

⁵ I wish I could remember the source of this quote to acknowledge it

My challenge is how to enable a youngster to build an understanding of what they want to commit time and effort to that will enable them to live satisfying and productive lives without imposing my own values and needs. This moves me from an impositional pedagogy to an inclusional one where there is a co-creative space between people where there is a mutuality as each contributes and benefits from their own and the others learning, skills, understandings, values. I can see that is reflected in my tendency to think more often now in terms of conversations rather than meetings.

Alan Rayner's work on inclusionality and Jack Whitehead's work on living values and living educational theories has offered me language, theories and methodologies to theorise and research my practice in a way that enables me to improve my practice and where what I do stays connected to what I intend to do. It is the space and music in which there can be a dance between theory and practice and new knowledge can be created that holds the values and aspirations.

The best understanding of inclusionality I have been able to construct has been between this quote from Jack Whitehead

The third epistemology is grounded in the living logic of inclusionality (Rayner 2004). This living logic is characterized by a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries that is connective, reflexive and co-creative. Naidoo (2005) has used this living logic in developing the inclusional and responsive standard of judgement of passion for compassion in her emergent living theory of inclusional and responsive practice. The living logic of inclusionality can be clarified and communicated with the help of multi-media explanations of educational influences in learning that show the educational relationships of action researchers in terms of interconnecting and branching channels and boundaries of communication.

And the video of Alan explaining what he understands by inclusionality in a clip that I has become known as the paper dance (<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/rayner1sor.mov>)

I enjoy this quote from Jack describing living educational theory as it communicates the flow that is becoming part of my understandings of inclusionality connecting with living theory research.

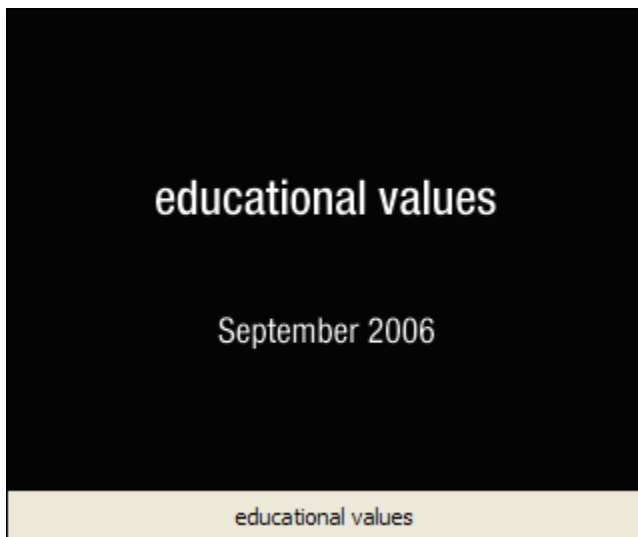
...as we conduct our research and generate our own living educational theories. These theories are living in the sense that they are our theories of practice, generated from within our living practices, our present best thinking that incorporates yesterday into today, and which holds tomorrow already within itself' Whitehead and McNiff2006 p3

The manner of communicating and evaluating implicitly carries the knowledge and values, the medium is the message. The requirement of other forms of educational psychology for 'hard data' and traditional academic text do not allow me to communicate the my understandings of an educational psychology rooted in inclusional and living theory epistemologies and therefore exclude such knowledge creation as valued. The

changes in the University of Bath regulations, concerning the forms of evidence which can be submitted as a doctoral thesis, confer an academic respectability and validity to other forms of representation.

I would like to remind you here that I asked you to keep your values in sharp focus and to share with you a picture which for me communicates my educational values beyond what is possible through ‘academic text’ or traditional forms of evidence in educational psychology and which has communicated to others

<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/jack/jwkeynote130706.htm>



I hope you can feel that such images contribute to my attempts to communicate with you when I say I judge my work by my contribution to an educational environment where youngsters learn to create their own futures so they are able to live productive lives from which they can derive a sense of pleasure, achievement and worth from. I want them to find what they can get passionate about, what they will get satisfaction from really committing to.

The move to using different forms of evidence has contributed significantly to the way I am able to theorise and research to improve my practice as an educational psychologist.

My enquiry

The enquiry I have pursued through writing this paper has emerged through the writing and now stands as ‘what of my understandings of educational psychological theory and practice are revealed through making public my embodied knowledge as an educational psychologist in the enquiry, How can (do) I improve my practice as a Senior Educational Psychologist?’

Through my work I give meaning to what it is for me to live a productive life. I judge my productive life in terms of:

whether I am contributing to the sense of pleasure in living, of pleasure in the reciprocal and responsive flow of enquiry and creation within and between myself and other human beings, and in that flow there is a connection with self and other, a mutuality expressed, that is beyond words.

As a senior educational psychologist I am seeking to

... work within the education system with the educational intent of engaging with others to generate and research their own living educational psychological theories, so we might each influence our own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we live and work

I ask you to hold these standards in soft focus as I invite you further into this enquiry in the next two sections and help me know whether you can see evidence of my meanings.

The standards I am asking you to hold in ‘soft focus’ arose from within the enquiry itself and for me give an example of how powerfully generative working with a living theory approach is. The traditional educational psychological methods would have excluded these understandings

Imagining possibilities and selecting one

I have tried presenting whole sweeps of my work, focussing in on sections, on specific events, but these strategies did not move me forward. What energised my work was the transformation of the title of this paper from ‘How can (do) I improve my practice as a Senior Educational Psychologist?’ to ‘Making public my embodied knowledge as an educational psychologist in the enquiry, How can (do) I improve my practice as a Senior Educational Psychologist?’ by my colleague and research supervisor. I have focussed on 2 pieces work by Chris Jones and Branko Bogнар to explain how I could see what I meant

by ‘embodied knowledge as an educational psychologist’. Through writing this paper I have transformed my understanding both about what I think my practice as an educational psychologist is and what I believe educational psychology to be. You will notice I have already explained what I understand although it is only here that I introduce you to how I went about it. That is because my thinking and construction of this paper is not linear but to communicate I must render it into a flowing narrative.⁶

Implementation and evaluation

I wish to focus your attention on two pieces of work where I believe you can see what I mean when I talk of educators and children generating their own living educational psychological theories. I have specifically selected the first to ask you to help me validate my claim to be improving my practice as a senior educational psychologist:

working within the education system with the educational intent of engaging with others to generate and research their own living educational psychological theories, so we might each influence our own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we live and work.

And the second claim that I am contributing to the knowledge base of educational psychology rooted an inclusional and living theory epistemology:

‘comprising a living body of knowledge, skills, understandings and values concerning how, why, when, where and what humans learn, expressed and researched with an educational intent through the generation of living educational theories and practice.’

This piece arose from a creative workshop at the authority SENCO Forum that I ran with my colleague Chris Jones (Inclusion Officer) and which Jack Whitehead (University of Bath) videoed.

Chris wrote as she looked at the video of herself with her inclusional values in sharp focus and Jack Whitehead extended the narrative by selecting the video clips that communicated to him what Chris was expressing.

I am smiling as I watch the video of our Creativity Workshop and I am feeling the joy and pleasure in seeing inclusionality being demonstrated naturally and spontaneously in, between and with my friend and colleague, Marie, and other educators who are

⁶ Reflecting on this process and explicating it would be interesting taking the lens of ‘traditional’ educational psychology with its traditions rooted in ‘scientific’ logic and methodologies and the lens an ‘inclusional living theory’ educational psychology rooted in ‘inclusional living theory’ logics and methodologies.

participants in the workshop. I am looking at Marie as she is inviting the group to respond to her questioning with her arms open, her eyes scanning the room and including all.



I feel the joy and pleasure in looking at Marie and me, sitting adjacently and leaning forward and smiling as we engage with the participants in discussing creativity, being creative and creating that moment together and with others.

(see the 8.2Mb, 1min. 31 sec. video clip from <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/marie/mhchwk1min31.mov>)

We move outside the room and as I listen to what I am saying, I feel the flow of energy that I felt at the time and as I always feel when I am working with colleagues, every interaction unique and co-creative. I am listening to the expressive, 'ooh', and the intermittent laughter as the egg is passed around, all apprehensive should the egg fall, all separate, yet one as we share the activity in that moment in time. Silence follows laughter and laughter follows silence; those bursts of energy cutting through the atmosphere of apprehension. There are no barriers here between us; there is no vacuum dividing us; we are flowing as one and as the first task is complete, we clap spontaneously together.

(see the 6.8 Mb, 1min 15 sec video clip from <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/marie/cjmhwkegg.mov>)

I am still smiling as I watch the video as we move back into the room. The conversation, the questions and answers, the smiles and the laughter; Marie and I sitting adjacently, moving forward in response to comments, hands moving, arms outstretched, openly invitational.



Can anyone see what I see? Does anyone feel as I feel? As I watch the flow of interaction between one and the other, I am reminded of Rayner's Paper Dance of Inclusionality (<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/rayner1sor.mov>) and O' Donohue's 'web of betweenness' (2003). I am looking at inclusionality in action of which I am a part and I am seeing the flow of life- affirming energy between Marie, the group and me, and as I watch, I am feeling the joy of what for me gives life meaning – the flow of interaction between one and the other and the pleasure of that co-dynamic relationship. I am reminded of these feelings of joy when I was a teacher interacting with the class: I am learning from them; they are learning from me; we are all learning together in a co-creational relationship which could not happen without one or the other within that moment in time.

I value who I am and what I try to be; I value others for who they are and what they try to be; I value what we are between us and what we try to be. It is through my relationship with others and the generative flow and pleasure of our interaction that I grow and live a life that has meaning for me.



Chris and Marie wrote:

It surprised me~us looking at the video to see those values of inclusionality being expressed during the workshop. At the time i~we felt a tension running through the session. I~we found it difficult at the time to find a shared focus, to connect the thinking of the individuals and the strands that were emerging in the group and to extend them beyond to a creative space. I~we heard concerns expressed about a shift to risk, a reluctance to explore possibilities beyond the constraints of government imposed initiatives, strategies and agendas and the frustrations with those perceived constraints.

I~we felt the tension, not because there was an antithesis between participants or a clash of values, rather the contrary; i~we felt frustrated by my~our inability to help participants engage as creatively as i~we believed they could have done and wanted to. I~we felt i~we had not kept the space as open and creative as i~we wanted to and i~we had not recognised and responded appropriately to my~our own inclination and that of others to present an argument justifying a position and a desire to impose personal agendas. Through acting and reflecting using video to research and communicate, i~we have understood better the qualities of inclusionality that i~we value and want to see more of and those questions of the nature, 'how do I...' rather than 'how can I...' have enabled me~us to recognise evidence of those values being lived.

Marie reflects:

Watching the video of the workshop and responding to the question, 'how do I work inclusionally', my reflections were as follows:

*The space between Chris and I feels easy, relaxed and open.
I can see an unspoken communication between us.
One takes the lead, then it is taken up by the other without any clash.
As the hands of one of us are open, the other is quiet
Our faces are open, relaxed, interested, inviting others to enter that space
Both Chris and I can be seen looking round the group
So between us we know that all are included.
Even if they choose not to speak.
The conversation flows back and forth across and around the room.
Chris open arms, embracing
An energizing confidence,
Completely in the present.
Moving with a fluency, an ease, a grace
Eliciting a response, even from the most constrained.
Laughter bubbles and occasionally erupts to punctuate when something important is expressed,
Or to release a tension.
Each participating, building on anothers offering,
And contributing their individual views.*

Through working with Chris and Jack to write the papers for BERA with inclusional values very clearly at the heart of our collaboration I believe you can see evidence of the educational influence we have had in our own learning and in the learning of each other. In the interest and engagement of participants in the workshop at the World Congress to the paper Jack and I presented I believe you can see evidence of that educational influence extended. With making that public through the web I hope you can see the opening of possibilities of engaging others with co-creating new knowledge.

In writing this paper I posed myself the question what has this to offer educational psychology? The answer that has emerged for me are thoughts of a new educational

psychology which embraces the uniqueness and complicated messiness that is what being human is, and understanding how I can work with this more productively as an educational psychologist,

The second piece of work I would like to focus your attention on is the video prepared by Branko Bognar of 10year old children in Croatia contributing to their own learning as they influence the learning of others through their living theory research.

Branko wrote

Dear friends,

I worked hardly two days and two nights to translate and title video recordings where you could see live example of our effort to apply action research in our educational practice.

First video (available at <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/Creativity-en2.wmv>) was starting point in Vesna Simic's and my action research. Our shared value is creativity, so we try to find a way how to fulfil this value. We realised that creativity is enough fulfil in her teaching of arts. But she confessed, and we find evidence for that when we analysed video recordings of her teaching, that she realised subject society and nature on traditional and uncreative way. So we decided to improve creativity in that part of her educational practice.

On second and third videos (available at http://www.jackwhitehead.com/AI2_0002.wmv and at <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/Validation.wmv>) we could find that children should not be treated only as participants in action research of adults (teachers) but also as co-researcher or standalone researchers. Marica Zovko, class-teacher was mentor to her students and I was mentor to her. Her students evidenced that they understand process of action research and know how to apply them to improve their living practice.

Warm regards

Branko

In these video's I see the children and adults showing respect for one another, valuing and actively seeking the contribution of the other to their learning while respecting themselves as of value. They show a responsibility to the other by keeping the space between them open and contributing to the flow of communication and opportunity for creation of new valued knowledge within and between participants. The discipline of the enquiry can be recognised, the knowledge of the educator is not denied but can be seen to contribute to the learning that is going on. The question that the child is exploring is acknowledged as of worth and in contributing to her enquiry, all those in the group, adults and children, are furthering their own skills and understandings.

Communicating with and my learning and...

As I explained in the introduction learning does not proceed in a neat linear fashion but to communicate I need to create a narrative which implies learning is discrete, ordered and happens in neat sequences; the learning that this paper has enabled me to construct has been anything but. I have started this paper 4 times, and gone through numerous redrafts; sometimes starting in the middle, the beginning, the end, and sometimes writing random apparently disconnected streams of consciousness. Through the construction of this paper I have communicated with Chris Jones and Jack Whitehead and the new knowledge created with them has been interwoven in the narrative of this account. What you read now carries the hope that the narrative communicates an expression of my living inclusional logic, my embodied values and my living standards of judgement.

I hope I have stimulated your imagination and you are beginning to think of evidence in your work where those values are being lived. If you are prepared to make those public then we can both contribute to each others learning and add to the body of knowledge of an inclusional, living theory educational psychology with inclusional values as standards of judgement.

Reference:

- Bloom B (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*; Michingan: Longman
- Chandler S & Wallace B (2004) *How TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) led to rapid school improvement*. Retrieved 6 December 2005 from [http://66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:i63ttaOJv2kJ:www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/lib/pdf/ChandlerWallace.pdf+How+TASC+\(Thinking+Actively+in+a+Social+Context\)+help+ed+to+ensure+rapid+school+improvement&hl=en&client=firefox-a](http://66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:i63ttaOJv2kJ:www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/lib/pdf/ChandlerWallace.pdf+How+TASC+(Thinking+Actively+in+a+Social+Context)+help+ed+to+ensure+rapid+school+improvement&hl=en&client=firefox-a)
- Claxton G, Lucas B (2004) *Be Creative*; London: BBC Books
- Covey S (2004) *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*; London: Simon & Shuster
- Dweck C (2000) *Self-Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development*; Florence: Psychology Press
- Furlong and Oancea, (2005) *Assessing Quality in Applied and Practice-based Educational Research, A Framework for Discussion*. Retrieved 22nd January 2006 from <http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:lz1CTUH-ukgJ:www.bera.ac.uk/pdfs/Qualitycriteria.pdf+John+Furlong+assessing+quality&hl=en&client=firefox-a>
- Gipps C (1994) *Beyond Testing: Towards a Theory of Educational Assessment*; Abingdon: RoutledgeFalmer
- Gould S. J (1981) *The Mismeasurement of Man*; New York: Norton and Co
- Hart S, Dixon A, Drummond M, McIntyre (2004); Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Huxtable M (2003) *The Elasticated Learner: beyond curriculum learning opportunities in a local authority*, *Gifted Education International* Vol. 17, No. 2, p140 - 150
- Huxtable, M. (2005) *Everyone a Winner: Towards Exceptional Achievement of All*, *Gifted Education International* Vol. 20, No. 1, p51-69

Knapman N, Huxtable M, Tempest A (1987) Redecorating Educational Psychology , Educational Psychology in Practice, Vol 3 No. 3 Oct 87 p29-33

Levey M, Tempest A, Knapman N (1986) Psychological and Advisory Services - Restructuring Service Delivery, *School Psychology International*, Vol. 7, p237 - 242

Rayner, A. (2005) Space, Dust and the Co-evolutionary Context of 'His Dark Materials'. Retrieved 2 August 2006 from <http://people.bath.ac.uk/bssadmr/inclusionality/HisDarkMaterials.htm>

Snow, C. E (2001) Knowing What We Know: Children, Teachers, Researchers. Presidential Address to AERA, 2001, in Seattle, *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 30, No.7, pp.3-9.

Whitehead J (1993) *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: Creating Your Own Living Educational Theories*; Dorset: Hyde Publications

Whitehead J, McNiff J (2006) *Action Research Living Theory*; London: Sage

Whitehead, J. How Can We Improve The Educational Influences Of Our Teacher-Researcher Quests? Keynote Presentation on 16 April 2005 at the ICTR Conference at McGill University, Montreal. Retrieved 22 January 2006 from <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/ictr05/jwict05key.htm>

Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?". Published in the *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 19, No.1,1989, pp. 41-52

Whitehead, J. (2006) What is a living educational theory approach to action research. Retrieved 22nd January 2006 from <http://www.actionresearch.net>