How Do I Improve What I Am Doing And Generate My Living Educational Theory? Action Research: Exploring Its Transformative Potential

Notes for a keynote address to the Conference of the Action Research Unit of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on the Theme of 'Action Research: Exploring its Transformative Potential' 19-20 August 2010.

Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University, UK.

20th August 2010

The keynote presentation is in 6 parts of around 9 minutes each on YouTube at:

1) **http://tinyurl.com/37jw85s**

2) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jc0XEU343Po
3) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgWRC9xa080
4) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Zc2UNdSAd4
5) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdk8NoSgvWw
6) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9xCmXwCPlQ

Summary

In this keynote I shall focus on two transformatory ideas. The first is the inclusion of 'I' and 'We' in our action research enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and 'How do we improve what we are doing?' The second is the inclusion of multi-media narratives in our action research accounts for representing the expression of the flows of embodied energy and values we use to explain our educational influences in learning. I believe that the inclusion of 'I' and 'we' in our questions helps to emphasise the transformatory potential of action research. I believe that the inclusion of multi-media narratives in our explanations of educational influence helps to transform the nature of the educational knowledge legitimated in Universities.

In the here and now I see improvements in my practice in terms of contributing to the processes of making public and spreading the influence of our embodied knowledge as educators. My justification for doing this is the belief that this is contributing to making the world a better place to be. In relation to generating my living educational theory I intend to deepen and extend the meanings of the explanatory principles I use to explain my educational influence in enhancing flows of life-affirming energy, values and understandings. I hope that you experience this influence in a way that relates to your own loving and productive life.

1) Including 'I' and 'we' in the questions we are asking, researching and answering in relation to improve our practice and generating knowledge.

During 2010 I accepted an invitation from the Action Learning Action Research Association to Chair the Education and Learning Virtual Networking Stream and facilitate a global dialogue in support of the Education and Learning Stream.

I received the following list of some of the presentations in the Education and Learning Stream in July 2010 for the 8th World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association to be held in Melbourne on the 6-9 September 2010.

Where is the praxis in practice-based education?

Interrogating Privileged Subjectivities: Tensions and Dilemmas in Writing Reflexive Personal Accounts of Privilege.

Empowering Teachers to Curriculum Change: An Action Research Approach.

The only logical action would have to be one of desperation.

The visual and tactile appeal of puppets as educational tool in South Africa.

Participatory Action Research. A pathway to match theory and practice in Environmental Education in Mexican Primary Schools

Can the goldfish see the water? A critical analysis of 'good intentions' in cross-cultural practice.

Organisational Boundaries and AR inside and outside Higher Education.

Involving Young People as Partners in Research:

Experiences from a Research Circle with Adolescent Girls.

Teacher Inquiry, Teacher Networks and the Preparation of Educational Researchers: Lessons Learned in a Multi-Partner Collaboration.

Surfacing learnings about power in the university and the community in a doctoral student's study of action research.
Nigawchiisuun: Participatory evaluation as indigenous methodology.

The Partner Assisted Learning System (PALS) project.

Collaborative Action Research and Action Learning.

A Deleuzian Framework for Participatory Action Research.

Action Research PhD Cohorts – Elements for Success.

Interrupting 'neoliberalism as usual' in the education sector: constraints and possibilities.

Institutionalising quality learning in a research intensive university.

Teaching Participatory Research: Making Higher Education Participatory and Relevant.

Participant-Centred Learning: Is Teaching by the Case Method an Effective Approach?

Developing reflective practitioners: a course designed to promote reflective learning.

Creating Dialogical Learning Space: Action-Narrative Inquiry as Alternative Teacher Education Curriculum.

"Taking Off" and flying with action learning and action research.

My question to the Education and Learning e-forum focused on my experience of the significance of omitting 'I' from all of the titles. I focused on the 'I' rather than the 'We' as it is easier to begin with the omission of 'I' without the added difficulties of working out whether the person using 'We' has ensured that the 'I's constituting the 'We' are freely agreeing that their 'I' is included in the 'We'.

In my experience of supervising masters and doctoral action research programmes, all the action researchers express a desire and focus on enquiring into improving their practice and generating knowledge. A generic question seems to be, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Yet the 'I' in such a question is omitted from every title in the Education and Learning Stream. Why is this?

One of the participant's responded:

I agree with P's thought - which implies to me the unconscious presumption of objectivism in the face of mechanistic and dehumanising organisational cultures. It's about survival, but paradoxically at the cost of humanity! When I have raised the matter of the active "self" in such settings, there is often great fearfulness in talking about first hand experience - even to the extent of having to work at the syntax to ground the discourse to a specific time and place rather than generalised descriptions. The person needs to be supported to value anything they have to say or think. In extreme situations, the idea of reflection is felt as pseudo therapy and self indulgent if not, as P says, self promoting. Systemically it passifies and invisibilises the self from the system - so that the "undiscussable " become the place of action - even harder to raise to visibility on AR terms. And if everyone does that then the dominant powers have nothing to worry about! I hope that this will be raised for dialogue and investigation at the Congress.

Do please browse through the programme for our conference today with the participant's titles and abstracts. (These are also accessible from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/southafrica/NMMUARUprog1920aug10.pdf) and talk with a partner about the validity of my claim that a distinguishing quality of action research is that the action researcher includes in what they are doing a self-study of a question of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Do you agree or disagree with this claim?

If you agree then why is it that your 'I' (or me or we) appears in so few titles but is clearly present in your abstracts?

To demonstrate the validity of my claim do look at the 36 titles and abstracts of the presentations. There are 8 titles containing 'I', 'my' or 'we'.

We have Heather Goode and Pieter Du Toit's 'How can I improve strategies of facilitating learning from a whole brain theory perspective?'; Sally Hobden 'Redressing poor schooling – working diligently on my own patch'; Farida Kadwa's 'Improving my teaching practice: providing transformative opportunities for my students'; Sibongile Madi's 'Addressing the context for

success: what we do before we write…. In a writing centre at a University of Technology'; Naretha Pretorius' 'My journey of awareness: reflections on objects and planes as memory triggers and identity indicators; Bonnie Kaplan's 'My living experience of influencing and creating economic independence for others'; Deirdre Kroone's and Busisiwe Alant's; 'Taking control of the tuck shop: how can we influence teenage perspectives on sustainable nutrition in school?'; Shubnam Rambharos' 'Action Research: taking me from isolation, exclusion, marginalization and frustration to inclusion, respect, commitment and understanding as the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECP) Coordinator at DUT'.

I attended the following three inspiring presentations in which 'I', 'my ' or 'we' did not appear in the title, yet the 'I' of the researcher was clearly present and necessary to the enquiry.

i) I think everyone heard the applause for Linda Vargas as Linda responded to the audience's request to demonstrate some of her meanings through dance. Linda responded, to the delight of the audience. Linda's title was 'Flamenco dance as education(al)'. In her abstract Linda writes:

'I show how I have used action research to teach flamenco dance with a holistic/education(al) approach in primary education'.

I think that Linda's claim in her Abstract is consistent with the question, 'How have I used action research to teach flamenco dance with a holistic/education(al) approach in primary education?'

ii) Consider Tobeka Mapasa title, 'Undergraduate student perceptions of the supervisor role and the research process: an unfinished story. In his abstract Tobeka states:

'In this paper I report on the first cycle of my journey to improve my practice as a research supervisor in order to add value to the students' development as researchers by improving the quality of their experience of the research process (Lee 2007)'.

I believe that Tobeka's statement above is consistent with an action researchers question:

How do I improve my practice as a supervisor by contributing to improvements in the students' development as researchers?'

iii) Consider Mikhail Peppas title, 'Reflections along the way: learning life skills and photojournalism on the streets of Durban'. In his abstract Mikhail states:

'In this paper, I will show how action research in the Photojournalism course at the Durban University of Technology contributes to the living experiences of first year students, so that they are equipped for success in the highly specialised field of Photojournalism'

How do I enhance my contribution to the process of equipping students for success in Photojournalism using action research in the Photojournalism course at the Durban University of Technology?'

If you disagree then what do you see as distinguishing qualities of action research. Your disagreement could help me to re-evaluate what I am seeing as the distinguishing qualities of action research. I see this question as a vital one to ask in a South African context with a constitution that values Ubuntu. English translations of Ubuntu often focus on the importance of recognising that 'I am because we are'. So, as action researchers within a culture that values Ubuntu, how do you form questions to research about improving practice and generating knowledge in a way that values the integrity of the 'I' whilst working within a communal and collective 'We'?

I now want to turn to the second idea in this keynote. This focuses on the transformative potential of action research in generating an educational epistemology through the use of multi-media narratives. I am thinking of an epistemology that recognises the relational dynamic of energy-flowing values as standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of claims to educational knowledge in explanations of educational influence.

2) Including multi-media narratives in explanations of educational influences in learning

Here is an extract from a keynote I presented on 15 May 2010 to the 'The Seventh Annual Action Research Conference University of San Diego School of Leadership and Education Science' . The theme of the conference was 'Empowerment and action research: Personal growth, professional development, and social change in educational and community settings.'

"Empowerment

Action research is focused on both improving practice and generating knowledge. Power-relations are involved in both. Every social context we live and work in has its own distinctive constellation of power relations. In educational context these are often felt in oppressive regulative instructions of government associated with curricula and assessment.

In the UK for instance we have what is known as the House of Lords Merits of Statutory Instrument's Committee. Here is a recent statement that highlights a national concern with the 'myriad requirements being imposed on schools':

"Able, brilliant and skilled professionals do not thrive in an environment where much of their energies are absorbed by the need to comply with a raft of detailed requirements. .... the evidence that we have seen during this inquiry has highlighted the problems that are caused to schools when too little thought is given to the systematic need to rely so heavily on regulation, and too little effort is put into managing the overall impact of statutory instruments issued, and monitoring whether the myriad requirements being imposed on schools are being taken seriously and implemented on the ground. .... We recommend that DCSF should now

look to shift its primary focus away from the regulation of processes through statutory instruments, towards establishing accountability for the delivery of key outcomes." (House of Lords, 2009, p.15)

Action researchers are generating knowledge. The status of this knowledge is linked to its legitimation in the Academy. In my early days as an educator and educational researcher I was faced with Academics who believed that the practical principles I used to explain what I was doing were at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more theoretical justification (Hirst, 1983, p. 18).

Some indication of how scholarship in educational research has moved on in valuing the practical principles of professional practitioners and researchers can be seen in the appointment of Dr. Joan Walton as the Director of the research Centre for the Child and Family at Liverpool Hope University, together with my own professorial appointment. We both share a commitment to supporting individual researchers in the generation of their living educational theories with their unique and living standards of judgment. We recognise that the living theories of individuals must be generated in collaboration with others if they are to enhance the flow of values that carry hope for the future of humanity. As I write this I have in mind the qualities of an Ubuntu way of being that resists the egocentric and selfish 'I', through a commitment to community.

I like Foucault's ideas of the power of truth and the truth of power. As action researchers I think that we are likely to experience some oppression from power relations that are resistant to the inclusion of the knowledge-claims of practitioner-researchers. I am thinking of knowledge-claims that include the 'I' of the researcher and the embodied expressions of the energy-flowing values that distinguish the knowledge-claim as 'educational'. In my meaning of 'educational', learning is necessary but not sufficient to distinguish something as educational. I must also recognise that the learning includes values that carry hope for the future of humanity. History is littered with examples of learning that has been associated with violations of these values. Being born towards the end of the second world war in 1944 immediately brings the Holocaust to mind.

I want to offer a way of thinking about empowerment that includes the recognition of the embodied expression of energy-flowing values that carry hope for the future of humanity. I use the video-clip below, on 'responding to matters of power and academic freedom', to communicate meanings of the embodied expression of empowerment and energy-flowing values in a creative response to a feeling of defeat and humiliation in a matter of academic freedom (see also http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmanchester170308.htm).

In 1987, following a disciplinary hearing involving two professors from the Department of Education at the University of Bath I received a letter from the Secretary and Registrar stating that my activities and writings were a challenge to the present and proper order of the university and not consistent with the duties the University wished me to pursue.

In 1990, this statement was taken by the Board of Studies for Education as evidence of a prima facie breach of my academic freedom and reported to Senate. Senate established a working party on a matter of academic freedom. They reported in 1991:

'The working party did not find that... his academic freedom had actually been breached. This was however, because of Mr Whitehead's persistence in the face of pressure; a less determined individual might well have been discouraged and therefore constrained.'

Here is my re-enactment of a meeting with the working party where I had been invited to respond to a draft report in which the conclusion was that my academic freedom had not been breached; a conclusion I agreed with.

What I did not agree with was that there was no recognition of the pressure to which I had been subjected to, while sustaining my academic freedom. In the clip I think you may feel a disturbing shock in the recognition of the power of my anger in the expression of energy and my passion for academic freedom and academic responsibility. Following my meeting with the working party the report that went to Senate acknowledged that the reason my academic freedom had not been breached was because of my persistence in the face of pressure. This phrase, 'persistence in the face of pressure' is a phrase I continue to use in explaining a resistance to pressures that could constrain academic freedom.

Responding to matters of power and academic freedom

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBTLfyjkFh0

What the clip does not show is my feeling of defeat and humiliation as I initially walked to the door having failed to convince the working party of the inadequacy of their conclusion. As I reached the door a felt a flow of life-affirming energy overcoming the feeling of defeat and humiliation. This seemed to emerge from outside my conscious awareness. On the video you can see (and I hope feel) the energy and expression of embodied values of academic freedom and responsibility in my creative response to my experience of their denial.

Whilst such experiences can be painful, our creative responses in empowerment can lead to personal growth (see http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aerictr08/jwictr08key.htm)

These experiences can, as I feel sure that you will recognise, be hugely significant in our lives because they straddle that terrible paradox of human existence. Sometimes the greatest strides in human evolution are exacted at the price of terrible suffering. I use the term narrative wreckage to describe such experiences. Including such narratives in one's living theory can help to avoid the criticism that such experiences have been omitted in the telling of a 'smooth story of self'. Difficult and painful experiences can, paradoxically, offer rich material for educational, professional and political growth. My 1993 publication is all about this paradox and generating living educational theories (see http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jwgek93.htm)."

(pages 6-9 of the keynote – you can access the keynote at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwsandiego10.pdf

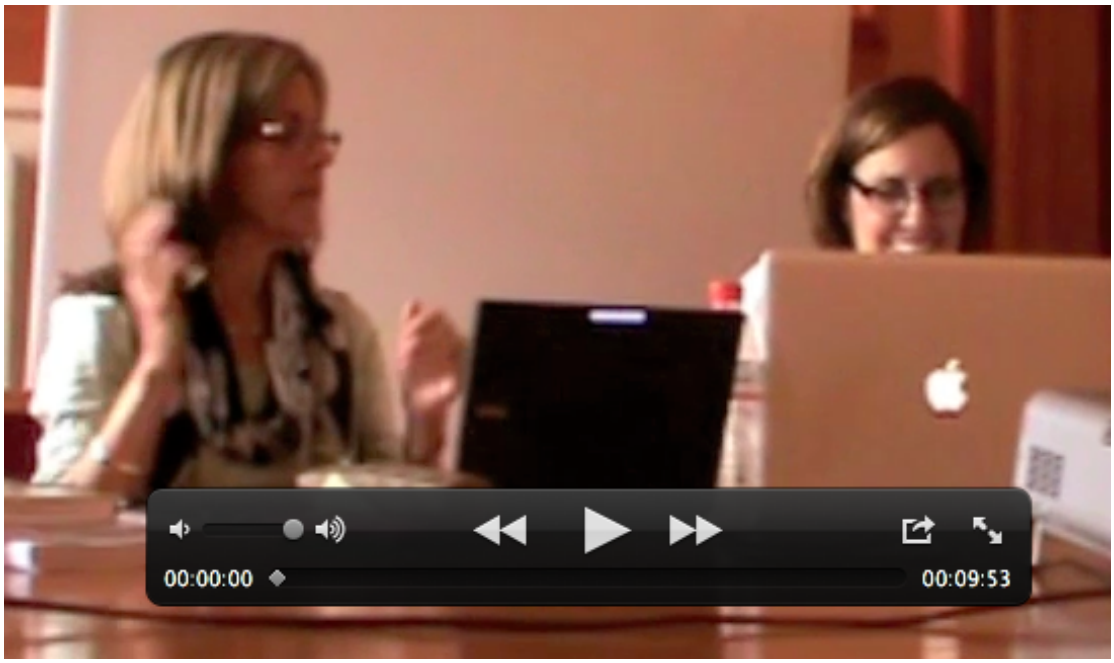
My claim about such uses of a multi-media narrative is that they enable the meanings of expressions of energy-flowing values in both 'being' and 'doing' to be included in an explanation of educational influence in learning. I am claiming that such visual representations are permitting the transformatory potential of action research in generating new forms of educational knowledge, to be realised in the processes of legitimation in Higher Education. At the heart of this transformation is what Alan Rayner refers to as natural inclusion as a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as connective, continuous, reflective and co-creative. You can access Alan's notes for his keynote to the 8th World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association in Melbourne (6th-9th September 2010) on:

Sustainability of the Fitting – bringing the philosophical principles of natural inclusion into the educational enrichment of our human neighbourhood

at:

http://actionresearch.net/writings/rayner/alanrayneralarakeynote0810opt.pdf

Perhaps I can show you my understandings of natural inclusion with two video clips at the beginning and end of Nancy Brown's and Jill Farrell's (2010) presentation to the 8th International Conference of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (2nd-5th August, 2010). I'll move the cursor quickly backwards and forwards along the clips to show my meanings of empathetic resonance. For me 'empathetic resonance' is a recognition of the energy-flowing values being communicated (through the clip) in a way that resonates with your own. The experience of resonance is accompanied by a physical response, which in relation to energy-flowing values I am associating with a flow of life-affirming energy in expressions of 'being'. I experience Jill's gaze as communicating a value for the other in the sense that Fukuyama (1992) uses the idea of thymotic recognition. I experience Nancy's expressions as presencing a loving warmth of humanity within the living space.



I'd now like you to read the concluding paragraph of Nancy and Gill's paper below on 'Confessions of two technophobes: A self study of two teacher educator's efforts to understand and develop a participatory culture within a technological environment'.

NANCY BROWN
Oakland University

JILL BELOFF FARRELL
Barry University

Confessions of two technophobes: A self-study of two teacher educators' efforts to understand and develop a participatory culture within a technological environment

Context

Teacher Educator 1 (Nancy) is in her car in Michigan, talking to Teacher Educator 2 (Jill), who is in Florida typing notes on her computer, and they are looking at their portion of the same blue sky. Twenty years ago this scenario would have been impossible. The explosion of technology in all of its varied forms, not only makes this possible, but probable and highly likely. Most of our students function this way on a daily basis during multiple encounters, with friends and acquaintances in multiple settings. Yet we are old enough to still be amazed at this process. Given the proclivities of students to use Web 2.0 technologies and the unique capabilities offered by these platforms, it is imperative that we as teacher educators use and understand these tools and the ways in which they influence our teaching and learning.

For us, and other teacher educators of our generation, the very nature of teaching is an instinctual act. We soak up another person's feelings and thoughts and direct our lesson from that physical place, connecting with our students and creating a participatory community by touch, by feel, by instinct. We have come to understand the limitations of the physical boundaries within which we teach. "When I am in a classroom and I feel that a person is learning, or not, I know what to do, but how do you do this when you can't see the person? There is a way, but how? Is it easier for younger teachers and those aspiring to teaching careers to do this, sharing through digital formats?" (TE 2).

Our aims were to co-create a participatory learning culture for our students crossing the boundaries of time, space and borders and document our journey. Our collective knowledge as experienced teacher educators is significant, yet our knowing is worthless if we cannot share and prepare a new generation of teachers. As self-study researchers we are committed to continual exploration of questions related to "How do I/we improve our practice?" We anticipated that the new knowledge created between us, and within each of our respective communities, would be transformational and generative, allowing for new learning to emerge simultaneously across borders and boundaries (Whitehead, 2008). We began to think about teaching in a virtual world as borderless and unencumbered by time, space, or walls.

The purpose of this self-study was to analyze what we learned and understood about teaching and learning within a new technological world. To that end we posed the following question: How have the new technologies forced each of us to rethink our professional identities?

A Twist

Our plan was to each separately integrate a digital media component into an existing class. While navigating this new addition and documenting our experiences and own personal development, we planned to utilize various communication tools, continuously engaging in on-going professional dialogue (Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton, & Pinnegar, 2004). We would simultaneously create a virtual community of practice to document and explore the use of technology to facilitate creating a virtual participatory community. What became apparent through our analysis was a conflict between our original intentions for the experience and the in-class outcomes that occurred. Simply stated, we became frustrated with ourselves as we avoided aspects of this project. As self-study practitioners, we have established the levels of professional intimacy that allowed us to enter into this new inquiry (Fitzgerald, East, Heston, & Miller, 2002). Why weren't we? We began, as women everywhere—by blaming ourselves. " I must finish my tenure process than we can begin"(TE 1 journal entry), "Family issues to deal with, let's meet tomorrow," (TE 2 message). We realized as we wrote an email asking for yet another extension to the deadline that something else besides being overworked middle-aged women was happening. Other work was being completed, other papers written, meetings attended, responsibilities met. We are both successful, overachievers adept in juggling our lives and careers. What was happening with this work that we were so eager to begin? To honestly answer this question our self-study had to take a new direction with a new question. Thus, we agreed to expand our study to include a re-conceptualization of our process and what could be realistically achieved (Loughran, 2004). Our new question: Why are two successful teacher educators resisting entering the web 2.0 environment? We hope this work helps other teacher educators attempting to use and be comfortable with e-learning and multimedia sources. We began this new self-study based upon a shared belief: To gain the knowledge needed about the potential power of these newer tools we must actively participate: Plan, DO, Study, ACT.

Theoretical Framework/Related Research

Rapid and pervasive increases in the use of a wide range of social networking software by the millennial generation have educators thinking how to build on these practices for educative purposes (Mason and Rennie, 2008). Using web 2.0 technologies to "harness collective intelligence" allows for the linking and connecting of emerging forms of theory and knowledge to be shared, built on and expanded across time, space and boundaries. As we write this, SS and AR scholars and researchers from around the world are interacting, peer commenting, and collaboratively doing research through an on-line e-seminar (one of many such platforms) devoted to "facilitating a global dialogue to explore the foundations, current applications, and future hybridizations of Action

research and Action Learning in the field of Education across all life stages and sectors, on a world stage" (Whitehead, 2010). Our relation to knowledge has changed, along with the way in which one acquires knowledge (Brown and Duguid, 2000). Technology has increased our access to information, but that does not equate with gains in knowledge. It is almost impossible for individuals to personally acquire ALL of the knowledge and experiences they need in order to act within a changing environment. While technology can certainly enhance instruction, it cannot substitute for the insights revealed when students connect with each other, and their mentors through the shared construction of knowledge and understanding (Mason and Rennie, 2008).

Methodology

Our approach is motivated by our belief that human behavior cannot be understood without insight into the meanings and intentions that individuals attribute for their actions. Ascribing to a hermeneutic theoretical stance (Gadamer, 1962), we believe that the researcher is involved in and part of the interpretation of the experience. The truth of spoken or written language is revealed when we, as researchers, explore the conditions for understanding its meaning. Thus, it is essential that we both recognize and integrate what we bring to our research and the context within which our research exists. We began again by writing narratives to understand our resistance. As participants, we are high energy, over achieving, middle age teacher educators who are considered excellent teachers within our own institutions. Nancy (TE1) is on faculty at a large midwestern state university. For the purpose of this research she focused her efforts on her undergraduate diversity course. Jill (TE2) is the department chairperson in a small, private university in the south. She focused her efforts on a doctoral class in advanced curriculum. The following data sources informed our study through reflective inquiry: reflective narratives written separately by each participant, corresponding notes about the narratives written by the other participant, journal entries, phone messages, email notes, and field notes.

Our emphasis was on finding ways to understand our resistance. Analysis related to this self-study evolved naturally through the process of reading and rereading the narratives, comparing notes and supporting claims with other data (Barone, 2008).

Findings

In this section we present our two narratives followed by our understandings.

Narrative One (TE1). On a fine spring day, Max came into my life. He is the cutest, albeit undisciplined, golden retriever puppy. My nest was empty and Maxi filled it up-- all 85 pounds of him. So what does Maxi have to do with Facebook? I met Max in New York City. Max's "birth father," a 30-something lawyer, thought owning a puppy would be a great way to meet women. After a little more than a week with the puppy and no girls in site, Max became mine. I picked him up and promised to send pictures via the Internet. My predicament--- I had no clue how to send pictures to some guy in NYC without using an envelope and stamp. Thus, my daughter set up a Facebook account for me. I knew Facebook --- it was the thing I had spent my daughter's teen years trying to get her to shut off in order for her to complete her schoolwork. Why would I want this thing? Clearly, I am too old.

My guide explained how easy it to was to use and how I would love to share photos of Max with my loved ones.

So I have this account. Immediately people began asking to be my friend. Students wanted to be my friend. I did not want to be their friends. I made a decision: I would befriend my relatives and colleagues, but not my students. However, I quickly learned that ignoring friend requests was rude. My daughter taught me there was etiquette to Facebook. Who knew? Lesson number one.

My new face-friends sent me stuff. Stupid stuff---- fill out your 100 firsts. Why would I want my colleagues to know the first time I slept with a man? Or ate grapes? I am private. I did not want to share my firsts. I also did not want to know the boring details of my face-friends' lives. I do not care that my friend was going grocery shopping, or that her cat scratched her. De-friending is rude-- lesson number two.

Lesson number three: this new medium has a language--- I started hearing things like: "that's a Facebook shot!!" I started thinking about what a picture represented to me. I chose a profile picture where I was picketing our university. I received many comments. One informed me that picketing was not something to be proud of when one was going up for tenure. Wrong again. I thought I was supposed to share. Apparently, you can only share politically correct things like, the first time you had sex. I put a new profile picture, a picture of Maxi. Confession of a middle aged educator: I hate Facebook. How can I teach online when I cannot keep up with my Facebook page? I joined my colleague in a self-study to understand teaching and learning within a technological world. How can I do this when I do not know how to use the technology proficiently? When I type too slowly, and do not know the tricks? When I am frightened of admitting I do not know. Most importantly… when I do not have an Internet identity. My identity is fixed, not fluid yet I am intrigued by creating and recreating identity in a new way that is neither public nor private but virtual (Greenhow, Robelia and Hughes, 2009).

Narrative Two (TE2). When we began our self-study, we discussed the challenges we were each facing with trying to re-shape our professional identities in a digital age. We acknowledged that the methods we feel most comfortable using are those that involve F2F group structures, discussion, interaction, etc. While quite comfortable in my choice of content delivery over the last few years, I had to admit that I was beginning to feel like a luddite when the conversation turned to digital methods of interaction, and the tools that some of my students were using in their own classrooms. I struggled with the options I was offering students regarding assignments and was intrigued with my own questions related to the creation of digital content for my classes. Yet, when push came to shove, I fell back on the same old "tried and true" strategies for instructional purposes. My intent for this study was to utilize newer technologies in the development and delivery of a new doctoral course, hoping to be able to get myself "up to speed" and comfortable interacting with my students, and colleagues, in a new language. It seemed quite manageable in theory, but in practice, it was a whole different ball game! Unfortunately, the semester started with a personal family tragedy, and then my physical condition deteriorated. With each attempt at using digital methods, I took 2 steps forward, and 4 backwards! FEAR of practicing the new

language in front of others, FEAR of failing, and FEAR of the unknown, became impediments to my learning. I listened to my students, my younger peers, and my own children, as they shared Facebook lives, blogging experiences, and Skype sessions, while feeling more and more frustrated at my own lack of finesse with these new tools. Writing, speaking and communicating through more traditional venues was serving me well. While I did engage in experiences that added to my professional knowledge (i.e. participation in a PT3 grant, etc.) I was really behind the eight ball when it came to web 2.0 usage. While claiming to not be interested in connecting with people I might not have seen for 30 + years on Facebook, nor wanting to be a voyeur of other people's lives, I was intrigued by the fascination of social networking tools for younger members of our culture. Never one to do what everyone else is doing because it is in vogue, I rejected signing on and connecting through these venues.

But when I began to think about my educational influence, and the concept of the relational dynamic crucial in creating new standards of judgment within our field (Whitehead), I was compelled to change my tune! My curiosity was piqued by the questions raised by Greenbow, Robellia, and Hughes (2009) regarding the proliferation of these technologies within our culture, but the lack of a corresponding pedagogy within the classroom. I began to see that I was, once again, a living contradiction! Did I dare to begin forming my own online identity as a teacher educator, and how would that change my practice? My question concerns not only the educative value of my students' participation in these newer platforms, but also how this impacts our knowledge base in teacher education, and contributes to new theories, pedagogies and curriculum for all learners. There are many questions I have related to data collection, analysis, and evidence when navigating in this arena, as well as questions related to validity.

For now, I will concentrate on building my own skill set, developing more confidence in the use of multiple platforms, and exploring the way in which this transforms my interactions with students, from teacher to learner, and back again.

Furthermore, I recognize that my students all have different styles and ways of learning, understanding and using information. Have I been using my own preferred learning/teaching style while professing, "varying your instructional delivery", have I done this? Not nearly enough!! As teacher educators, caught up in the work of the academy, are we so rushed and frazzled that we neglect our learners and just get by?? I think that this might happen more often than not due to all of the variables that come into play. Too much to do, not enough time, afraid of not knowing enough? These are merely excuses that impede my progress! As a teacher, if I am not always learning, I should not be teaching!

As a result of analyzing our narratives four findings were evident: (1) The importance of online identity formation, (2) fear and resistance goes hand in hand (3) proficiency is vital, and (4) a renewed commitment to the reconceptualization of knowledge as socially constructed, devoid of authority and power. For more mature educators such as us, the formation of our identities occurred throughout our lifetimes, in our experiences in school, organizations, and various public venues. Our family relationships, cultural connections, and recreational choices helped to shape who we were and what we would become. The line between our public selves and private selves is more fixed, more separate. In contrast the learners of today use Web 2.0 technologies to actually form their identities, and the more proficient they become in using this rapidly changing medium, the more they use these methods in shaping who they are. They come to the learning situation that we have shaped hoping and expecting to share their knowledge in multiple ways and they are frustrated by the authoritarian view of knowledge most often encountered. There is much to be gained from inquiring into their experiences with these tools, and the knowledge gained from the co-construction of meaning can enhance our collective knowledge base.

Afterthoughts

It has been months since we wrote the first eye opening draft of this paper. As promised we each took baby steps ahead.

Nancy: I have integrated on-line learning into one of my undergraduate classes. Asking my students to create a digital journey, a new multi-media assignment allowing students to represent thinking in a broader context. I want to understand student thinking within their time and place. So far the assignment has raised questions about equity and limited access.

Jill: I have confronted my own inadequacies as an educator, and asked myself, once again, "How do I improve my practice?" As a 21st century teacher educator, am I concerned with helping all those with whom I come in contact with to "be the best they can be"? Am I once again, a living contradiction, by not embracing the opportunities provided for me to jump into numerous Web 2.0 platforms for my own learning? Can I do this? What is standing in my way? Merely my own struggle with my "teacher identity"!

Conclusion

It is our belief that teaching with technology holds fabulous possibilities yet we do not believe it can move forward unless those of us who are great teachers bring our knowledge to the very place that is scary and unfamiliar, where we are novices not experts. Those of us who understand the possibilities of teaching must get out of our own way and develop expanded professional identities that incorporate and grow through a web-based culture. Teacher educator one and two are now ready to begin the original goals for this self-study: to utilize the web and 2.0 technologies within our classes, using new media to create learning communities that encourage and invite participatory experiences for ourselves and our students. We invite you all to become our Facebook friends!

References

Barone, T. (2008). Creative nonfiction and social research. In A. Cole & G. Knowles (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in social science research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Brown, J. S. & Duguid, P. (2000). *Social life of information.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.

Fitzgerald, L., East, K., Heston, M., & Miller, C. (2002). Professional intimacy: Transforming communities of practice. In C. Kosnik, C. Beck, A. R. Freese, & A. Samaras (Eds.), *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study* (2, pp. 77-80). Herstmonceaux Castle, East Sussex, United Kingdom: Queens University.

Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and method.* New York, NY: Seabury.
Greenhow, C., Robelia, B., & Hughes, J. E. (2009). Web 2.0 and classroom research: What path should we take now? *Educational Researcher*, *38,* (4), 246-259.
Guilfoyle, K., Placier, P., Hamilton, M. L., & Pinnegar, S. (2004). The epistemological dimensions and dynamics of professional dialogue in self-study. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 1109-1167). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
Loughran, J. J. (2004). Learning through self-study. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 151-192). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
Loughran, J. J. & Russell, T. (2007). Beginning to understand teaching as a discipline. *Studying teacher education: A journal of self-study of teacher education practices, 3*(2), 217-227.
Mason, R. & Rennie, F. (2008). *E-learning and social networking handbook: Resources for higher education.* New York, NY; Routledge.
Whitehead, J. (2008). Combining voices in living educational theories that are freely given in teacher research. *Keynote presentation for International Conference of Teacher Research on Combining Voices in Teacher Research.* New York, NY.
Whitehead, J. (2010). *PRACTITIONER-RESEARCHER @ JISCMAIL.* AC.UK.

As you read the paper and conclusion I think that you will agree that it is clear, well-written and communicates the researcher's meanings. I want to focus on the conclusion:

"It is our belief that teaching with technology holds fabulous possibilities yet we do not believe it can move forward unless those of us who are great teachers bring out knowledge to the very place that is scary and unfamiliar, where we are novices not experts. Those of us who understand the possibilities of teaching must get out of our own way and develop expanded professional identities that incorporate and grow through a web-based culture. Teacher educator one and two are now ready to begin the original goals for this self-study: to utilize the web and 2.0 technologies within our classes, using new media to create learning communities that encourage and invite participatory experiences for ourselves and our students. We invite you all to become our Facebook friends! "

In particular I want to focus on the way in which the two video-clips could help to develop expanded professional identities that incorporate and grow through a web-based culture. I am thinking of Tillich's (1962, p. 168) point in the *Courage to Be* where he writes about the state of being affirmed by the power of being itself. As Nancy and Jill, in their own unique ways, communicate their life-affirming energy and values in relationship with others, I am suggesting that the digital technologies associated with multi-media narratives can assist educational action researchers to express the energy-flowing values that help to constitute who we feel and know ourselves to be as well as providing the explanatory principles in explanations of our educational influences in what we are doing.

During yesterday's presentations I was struck by the life-affirming energy and relational qualities expressed by Liz Wolfvaardt's presentation of 'A spoonful of sugar: Action research and the bitterness of medicine', Hanlie Dippenaar's presentation of 'Action Research and Community Engagement' and Fazal Kahn's presentation of 'Understanding informal settlements in Durban: gardeners and domestic workers from the slums graduating from the University of Life'. Yet, whilst it was clear to me, and I believe the rest of the audience, that the life-affirming energy and relational qualities of the presenters were most significant in the communications of their meanings the presenters did not show any awareness of their significance. Whilst this point may sound critical I'm not intending it as criticism. My intention is to offer this observation in the spirit of captivating the imaginations of the presenters in terms of the significance of the expression of their life-affirming energy and values as their enquiries continue.

My anxiety is that until action researchers place their own 'I's and collective 'we's at the heart of their enquiries into improving their practice and generating knowledge, the transformatory potential of our action research for improving practice will fall far short of what we could accomplish together.

My anxiety is that until action researchers gain academic legitimacy for their energy-flowing values as living standards of judgment in what counts as knowledge in Universities, then the transformatory potential of the knowledge we are creating will continue to be constrained by traditional, propositional or dialectical judgments as to what counts as educational knowledge and theory (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

My hope for the future lies in the creativity and courage of groups such as the Self-study for Transformative Higher Education and Social Action (SeStuTHESA)

at the University of Durban, the Action Research Unit at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the inspirational work of Lonnie Rowell at San Diego University, of Margaret Reil the Chair of the Action Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, of Susan Goff the President of the Action Learning Action Research Association and the countless thousands of action researchers who are passionate about improving educational opportunities and who, thanks to the internet, can now share their accounts with us all so that we can each benefit from knowing what each other is doing in enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for the future of humanity and our own.

In helping each other with our educational enquiries and extending the influence of our accounts I am mindful of the commitment of the Liverpool Hope University's Faculty of Education. This is the commitment to education as a means of humanizing society and of facilitating the flourishing of humanity. As part of contributing to this commitment I believe that it is important to share our accounts using the internet. At Wednesday's workshop, only 3 of the 33 participants had their own websites. If you google spanglefish you can see how to set up your own website free of charge. Look at what Jean has made available at http://www.jeanmcniff.com . You can go into the books section and access details of Jean's publications and our joint publications. You can go into the Theses section and access the doctoral and other successfully completed supervisions at Glamorgan and Limerick Universities and St. Mary's College. I'm hopeful that everyone here will feel an educational responsibility to make public their own embodied knowledge as educators. I've tried to fulfill this responsibility with the resources in my own web-space at http://www.actionresearch.net . I think you might enjoy and find useful the living theory and the master educator's programme sections on the left hand menu. On the right hand, What's New section you can access this keynote and join the 2010-2011 practitioner-researcher e-seminar . This provides a global forum for sustained and sustaining conversations between practitioner-researchers who are working to improve their educational practice and contribute to the evolving knowledge-base of education.

I do hope that we sustain our conversations for many years to come and continue to express the educational values that have been expressed so fully during the conference. It has been a pleasure to be with you.

In conclusion I want to thank Professor Lesley Wood, the Director of the Action Research Unit at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University for the privilege of addressing the conference. Such events enable me to feel the life-enhancing collective energy we express together with values that make what we are sharing so worthwhile. Thank You.

References

Brown, N. & Farrell, N. (2010) *Confessions of two technophobes: A self study of two teacher educator's efforts to understand and develop a participatory culture within a technological environment*. Utah; Brigham Young University.

Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. London; Penguin.

Rayner, A. (2010) *Sustainability of the Fitting – bringing the philosophical principles of natural inclusion into the educational enrichment of our human neighbourhood.* A keynote presentation to the 8th World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association in Melbourne (6th-9th September 2010). Retrieved on the 17th August 2010 from http://actionresearch.net/writings/rayner/alanrayneralarakeynote0810opt.pdf

Tillich, P. (1962) *The Courage to be.* London; Fontana

Whitehead, J. (2010) *Empowerment and action research: Personal growth, professional development and social change in educational and community settings.* A keynote presented on 15 May 2010 to the 'The Seventh Annual Action Research Conference University of San Diego School of Leadership and Education Science' . The theme of the conference was 'Empowerment and action research: Personal growth, professional development, and social change in educational and community settings.' Retrieved 17 August 2010 from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwsandiego10.pdf

Whitehead, J. & Rayner, A. (2009) From Dialectics to Inclusionality: A naturally inclusive approach to educational accountability. Retrieved 9 July 2010 from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arjwdialtoIncl061109.pdf