

## **An inclusional approach to enhancing life-circulating energy, creativity and educational influences in learning in a Children's Service.**

*Some points for a discussion on our poster session for presentation at the British Educational Research Association Conference in Manchester from 2-5 September 2009, at the improving practice conversation 8.00-9.00 on Thursday 4 June 2009.*

I'd like to check with you the validity of my belief that you see yourself and others in the video-clips communicating something that matters to us in a way that expresses our life-affirming energies with our values and understandings.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF1UThD-Woo>  
**Dan Barwise** <http://www.thelearningcentre.org.uk/> - enhancing learning with the widening learning web.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaJi-GAW3gk>  
**Jack Whitehead**  
<http://www.arexpedition.smontana.edu/articleviewer.php?AID=80> - why I do what I do - creating meaning and purpose in life.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wz9uov37p4E>  
**Sonia Hutchinson** - empowerment in young people with participation.



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_oY-urCrks](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_oY-urCrks)  
**Chris Jones**  
<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/cjmaok/cjma.htm> - enhancing educational experiences with creativity and inclusion.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNBGxssfvdvo>  
**Marie Huxtable**  
<http://www.spanglefish.com/mariessite/> - what really matters in education is the expression and development of talents.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDcggqIb7J4>  
**Kate Kemp**  
<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/tuesdayma/kkgunit2008.htm> - sustaining relationships with approval, affection and a deep and abiding regard.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-MkVqaaM8>  
**Nigel Harrison**  
<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/bera/nhbera09.pdf> - holding open a loving space as a manager in children's service.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF3a-1YRLNY>  
**Andrew Barker** - the truth comes out through narrative.

I'm wondering if the above video-data, linked to our accounts of our influences in our workplaces, can help us to communicate the meanings of the energy-flowing values that are central to the way we account to ourselves for what we are doing.

These values and their life-circulating energy are always omitted from forms of accountability that focus on statements about the 'delivery of key outcomes'. I believe that this is because statements on pages of text cannot carry the meanings of flows of energy with our values that we express in our lives and work. I believe that you will see what I mean by looking at our images above and clicking on the url immediately below any of them (if you are viewing this with your browser connected to the internet) to see a brief video-clip where we are all saying something that matters to us.

I like the way Sonia's image below communicates this life-circulating and life-affirming energy between four people engaged in a conversation. In Sonia's image the boundaries between individuals have dissolved (however temporarily) in the sharing of thoughts and pooling of energy. This is what I am claiming happens in many of our Thursday morning conversations. As I look at all of the images they carrying a 'pooling' of our energies and the confidence that each one of us is doing something worth while. I'm looking forward to hearing your responses.

There is a brief statement under each video-clip. Where your name is highlighted in blue you can click on the url immediately following for some of your writings in which you are accounting to yourself and others for living your values as fully as you can in ways that show you are also fulfilling what others might see as 'delivering key outcomes'.

I believe that our accounts are showing us engaged in processes of our own professional development in which we creatively respond to 'statutory requirements' in ways that enable us to sustain our integrity and beliefs in the value of what we are doing. I believe that we all are agreed with the House of Lord's committee's point that the DCSF should shift its primary focus away from the regulation of processes through statutory instruments, towards establishing processes of accountability:

*"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)

I'd like to check out the validity of my belief that we are developing forms of accountability in which we share our stories of our enquiries of the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and 'How do I live my values more fully in what I am doing?' In the process of doing this I believe that there is evidence to show that we can also be seen to be 'delivering key outcomes' as expressed in government policies. I'm wondering if we share the belief that developing a form

of accountability that focuses primarily on the 'delivery of key outcomes' will not enhance the delivery of key outcomes to the same degree as focusing on living our values as fully as we can?

I also believe that Chris' dissertation is showing us a form of accountability that focuses on living, energy-flowing values whilst at the same time providing evidence for the 'delivery of key outcomes'. I also believe that Chris' dissertation is contributing to an epistemological transformation in educational knowledge. I think Chris's dissertation does this because of its inclusion of video-clips of Chris at work. The multi-media format enables Chris to show that what she does in her professional life includes the embodied expression of her energy-flowing values and understandings.

By making public the meanings of these embodied energy-flowing values I think Chris is showing us the practical principles she uses to explain what she is doing as she asks, researches and answers her question, 'How do I improve my practice as Inclusion Officer working in a children's service?' Such explanations are claims to knowledge and as our theories of knowledge influence the way we see the world I have focused my own research on understanding the nature of educational knowledge. That is, I have focused on epistemological issues related to educational knowledge and theory. I think that Chris' dissertation is contribution to an epistemological transformation in educational knowledge through the generation and analysis of her living educational theory. By a living educational theory I am meaning an individual's explanation for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. At the heart of any epistemology are the standards of judgment we use to evaluate the validity of our claim to know something. Hence my focus on the nature of the living standards of judgment we use in our living educational theories.

I think that each of us is expressing such living standards of judgment in the video-clips above. The reason I believe that these are so important is that they are grounded in the energy-flowing values and understandings we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives.

If you have the time do have a look at the successful keynote symposium proposal on *Explicating A New Epistemology For Educational Knowledge With Educational Responsibility* at:

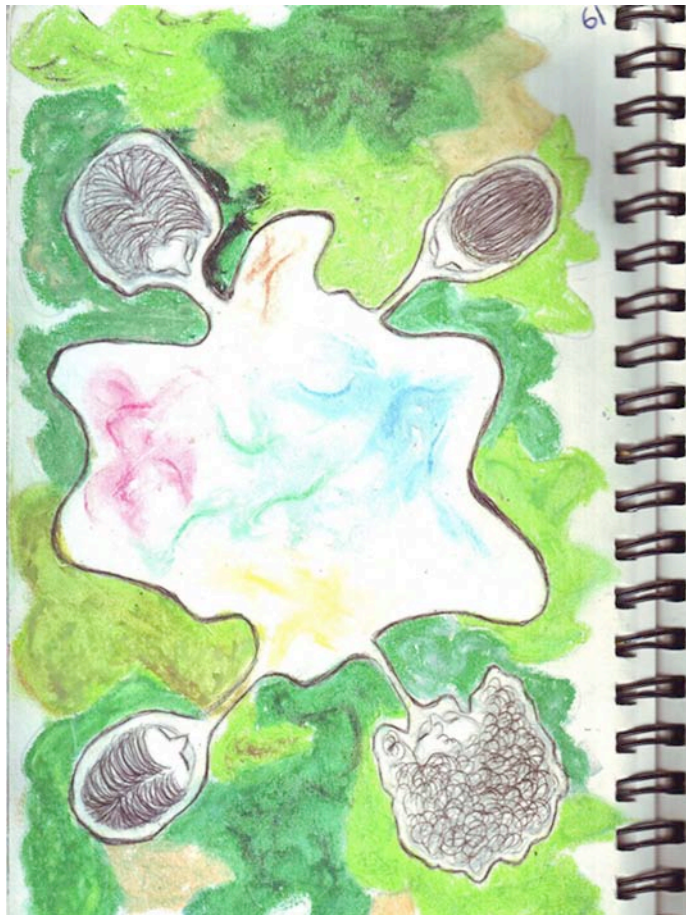
<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/bera/bera09keyprop.pdf>

This will be presented on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 in Manchester where Chris is discussant.

In the development of our inclusional/educational theories of what we are doing I have suggested that we focus on producing evidence-based explanations for our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we are living and working. Because I think Chris is showing a way in which we could do this I'd like us to focus on the implications of Chris' dissertation (just click on Chris Jones under Chris' image above).

Because of Chris' use of video I think she is showing how we can represent flows of life-affirming/life circulating energy with values and awareness in our accounts of what we are doing.

Here is the image from Sonia's journal to represent such a pooling of energy and awareness in conversation.



Here is our successful poster proposal for presentation at BERA 09 in Manchester. The organizers have written to say that our poster can be displayed from 09.00hrs on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 and should be removed by 12.00hrs on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

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\* Background to the topic;

The representation of flows of life-circulating, life-affirming and life-enhancing energy (Vasilyuk, 1991) in explanations of educational influences in learning, is under researched in education. Through a participatory self-study the practitioner-researchers produce a visual representation of the influence of such flows of energy in the growth of their educational knowledge. Eisner (2005) has highlighted the importance of developing multi-media representations of educational knowledge. 'Open Dialogues' in Research Intelligence (Whitehead, 2008) has drawn attention to

an epistemological transformation in educational knowledge in the living theories of practitioner researchers.

\* Analytical and/or theoretical frame;

Each researcher represented in the poster has analysed their educational influence in learning from a living educational theory perspective that involves the expression and clarification of embodied values as explanatory principles.

\* Research questions and/or focus of enquiry;

Each practitioner-researcher represented in the poster is engaged in an enquiry of the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' in the context of their professional context in education. The research questions include a sense of action that is located within sociocultural influences.

\* Research findings and/or contribution to knowledge.

The poster provides a visual representation of original, energy flowing and values-laden standards of judgment as a contribution to an epistemological transformation in educational knowledge and to the ongoing open dialogue in Research Intelligence.

- Research methods and/or mapping of literature;

The research methods include action research cycles (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). The representations on the poster draw from the methods in the five approaches to educational research distinguished by Cresswell (2007). These are the phenomenological, case study, ethnographic, grounded theory and narrative approaches to educational research.

## References

Cresswell, J. W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. California, London, New Dehli; Sage.

Eisner, E. (2005) *Reimagining Schools: The selected works of Elliot W. Eisner*, Oxford & New York; Routledge.

House of Lords (2009) *The cumulative impact of statutory instruments on schools: Report with evidence*. The Stationery Office Limited: London. Retrieved 8 May 2009 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/13/lords-report-dcsf>.

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2006) *All You Need To Know About Action Research*.

Whitehead, J. (2008) *An Epistemological Transformation in Educational Knowledge*. *Research Intelligence*, No. 105, pp. 28-29.

Vasilyuk, F. (1991) *The Psychology of Experiencing: the Resolution of Life's Critical Situations*. Hemel Hempstead; Harvester Wheatsheaf.