

Working Together for Educative Community through Research*

**Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association given at the Annual Conference, Queen's University, Belfast, August 1998.*

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ABSTRACT *The paper explores the threat of Balkanisation. Whereas in the USA the debate has focused on competing research paradigms, in the UK it is seen to result from threats to the status quo posed by the media's portrayal of government hostility to education. This has led to the creation of folk devils whose ideas spread moral panic amongst the research community. The paper identifies three such folk devils and argues that the moral panic comes from a research community that has not learned to constrain its disagreements. The paper argues a case for an educative community based on constrained disagreement that is contained by its shared desire for ethical, creative and emancipatory solutions to educational problems. An example of a small, local research community is used to outline the 'promises and perils' of such a solution.*

I like to think of BERA as analogous to the Roman God Janus, whose statue stood outside every Roman household. Like Janus, BERA can protect the diverse educational constituency that it represents, by looking backwards and making sure that what is valuable from the past is preserved and by looking forward and positively promoting new ideas and practices. I think that BERA's strength comes from its diversity and from a dialectic of progress that 'constrained disagreement' could make possible. I see the Janus image being enriched by the metaphor conjured by Richard Pring in his 1994 Stenhouse lecture, when he described a community of educated people as a safe house where diverse others were 'invited into the house and made to feel at home' and not left 'to press their noses against the window.' Donald McIntyre (1997a) has linked BERA's diversity with its open and outward-looking approach, which suggests that BERA must face inward and outward, securing its community while seeking to enlarge the democratic promise of education as Jean Rudduck (1995) suggested.

Community and Diversity

The theme I want to explore in this presidential address is that of *working together for educative community through research*. My wish to focus on 'working together' is not to ignore diversity and difference amongst educational researchers. I want to hold on to the idea that the richness of BERA is due to its diversity and to its potential for creating a 'dialectic' of improvement. However, we need to ensure that our diversity leads to dialogue and joint action; that we are able to constrain our disagreements in the interest of enriching rather than maiming our community. I am thinking here along similar lines to Alastair McIntyre's (1990) argument for a post-liberal university. To paraphrase McIntyre: I see the future of educational research as one where rival standpoints exist alongside one another so that researchers can

enter into disagreement with each other in order to test their work against the strongest objections; a place of constrained disagreement; and a place where researchers can initiate research users into conflict rather than brainwash them into consensus.

Value Positions and Standards of Judgement

Despite what I have said about diversity, I do believe that I can talk about an 'educational research community'. A number of shared values to do with education and research distinguish us from politicians, parents, business folk and others. Jean Rudduck (1995) suggests that they include the principles of 'respect for evidence, respect for persons, respect for democratic values and respect for the integrity of our acts at every level of the research enterprise'. Morwenna Griffiths (1997) suggests 'research that improves the education of children ' and students ... [which includes] personal and political improvement [and has] ... a strong ethical underpinning'. My idea is that educational knowledge that if applied successfully in educational practices and policies, would enhance the rationality, justice, effectiveness and humanity of society. I mean that educational research should strive to be ethical, creative and emancipatory and contribute to the imaginative acquisition of knowledge.

However, although I share these values with other educational researchers, I know many of us will disagree about their exact meaning and application to particular contexts. It would be foolish not to recognise that there are differences and conflicts. For example, David Hustler & Ian Stronach [1] summarise some of the points of contention when they say that 'how research-based knowledge can affect professional practice is both controversial and unresolved. Many positions exist. Behind that controversy there are different assumptions about the relation between knowledge and action, the nature of knowledge itself, and different paradigms of inquiry'. They agree with Tooley (1998) that these controversies should be scrupulously examined and that alternative positions and explanations should be explored.

But controversy also includes differences about the purpose of the research enterprise. These diverse values need airing also, so I am surprised when a controversial educationalist like David Hargreaves (1996a) complains about sociologists who 'sour the climate with critiques of government policy which too often are merely criticism from a different value base' (p. 5). What does he mean? Presumably he is not referring to Geoff Whitty's (1997) exemplary analysis of quasi markets in education? Critiques such as this make a rich contribution to educational research, and enhance debates about educational objectives as well as contributing evidence about different ways of achieving them. This is why it is important that research should initiate its users into conflict so that research users, particularly government ministers, can overcome what Peter Mortimore has described as 'an insecurity that resists challenge or criticism and wishes to inhibit dissenting voices' [2].

Balkanisation

Although my focus on 'working for community' may seem relevant to the concerns of our location here in Belfast, I am actually thinking more in terms of the politics of educational research and the threat of what the Americans have termed Balkanisation (Donmoyer, 1996). On the American continent the idea of Balkanisation is associated with what has been called

the 'crisis of legitimation' (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). For example, John Smith (1997) talks about 'a never-ending process of dis-sensus, incommensurability, irretrievable conflicts of interpretation and hermeneutical nihilism'. Balkanisation is the antithesis of community. We should resist both the reality and the label of Balkanisation. The American debate has focused on competing research paradigms as the cause of Balkanisation. There is an element of this operating in the UK, where the divide between new paradigm research and traditional scientific research is still detrimental to the former.

The major crisis in the UK, however, would seem to relate to recent threats to the *status quo* posed by the media's portrayal of government hostility to educational research. The threats are often demonised by the creation of a folk devil (Cohen, 1973) whose ideas spread panic amongst the educational research community. It is in the responses of members of the research community themselves that the danger of Balkanisation lies. Some recent attempts to discredit 'folk devils' have been so heavy with invective and personal abuse that balanced critique has been all but lost and everyone is pushed to take sides. In other responses, influential researchers have been so keen -to dissociate their own research from the implied criticisms that they have jumped ship altogether. Like Phil Hodgkinson (1998), I find little comfort in being relegated to that 'minority of institutions' where the quality of research is not high, and who are seen as diverting attention from those rated 5*, 5 and 4 (Gipps, 1997).

If we must create folk devils, let our responses to them not widen the gulf further. We need to show a willingness to debate our differences with more humility and willingness to listen and learn than we are demonstrating currently. I think we should engage in what Richard Winter (1989) has called dialogical critique, and consider alternative interpretations and solutions *including* those that sound like victory narratives. I welcomed the optimism of Donald McIntyre (1997b) as retiring president of BERA, when he spoke of the potential for a new situation if we were prepared to take the opportunity. 'Doing this', he said, 'will mean admitting that everything is not right with educational research', while at the same time continuing 'to resist ... irrational and clearly unjustifiable attacks upon us'. At that time he was objecting to the Higher Education Funding Council for England's decision to place education at the lowest of its three subject levels for funding research.

And so to the folk devils ...

Folk Devils and Moral Panics

Michael Barber emerged as a folk devil when he moved from his post as Professor of Education at the University of London Institute of Education to head the new Standards and Effectiveness Unit in the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The ensuing moral panic was related to his 1997 book, *The Learning Game*, where he makes far-reaching proposals, designed to be provocative, for improving the British educational system. The fear is that Barber has the ear of government ministers who will implement his idea without proper consideration of their consequences. Even the non-partisan review of educational research commissioned from the Institute of Employment Studies [3] has been awaited with trepidation because there is uncertainty about whether the DFEE will react cautiously or follow Michael Barber's apparent wish for a 'root and branch' restructuring of educational research.

School-based teacher-researchers have also been incensed by the suggestion that teachers need a 5-year review of progress, which Barber likened to the Ministry of Transport (MOT) certificate of road worthiness for a car; that during each period of 5 years in their professional lives teachers would be expected to update their pedagogic skills; that they would need to take a term out of teaching to experience industrial processes; and that they would become part of a 'research based profession'-which was 'not what exists at present'. Moyra Evans and others (1998) have pointed out that 'in the two pages devoted to enthusing about a research based profession within his book about improving teaching which runs to 304 pages altogether, there is plenty of criticism of research and its relevance, but not a mention of the part action research is currently playing in schools such as [Denbigh]'. She says that 'Michael Barber is proposing a "done to" model of teacher development through research-the sort of model that was rejected as inappropriate for teachers at Denbigh as far back as 1992'.

David Hargreaves was demonised as a result of his 1996 address to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), in which he blamed 'second rate educational research' because much educational research was not cumulative and lacked impact (Hargreaves, 1996b). He suggested that educational researchers might emulate the medical profession and change to an evidence-based practice. Some of Hargreaves's views might have led to a useful discussion if he had chosen to address them to the research profession rather than to the TTA. Instead, his lecture fuelled the moral panic. Donald McIntyre (1996a) pinpointed the reason as 'the potential consequences of these negative views of educational research being expressed so publicly in such a setting by such an authority figure at a time when both the TTA and HEFCE might be influenced regarding the disposal of their research budgets'. Since then the TTA has confirmed people's worst fears. It looks as if the new national professional qualifications will be gained at the expense of academic study (Brown, 1998). Michael Bassey says that the effect of transferring in-service education and training (INSET) funds to the TTA is that 'just under half (36 of 75) of the universities and colleges in England providing INSET courses for teachers in 1907/8 will no longer be state funded for these courses by the year 2002.' and that 'roughly 40% of the teachers taking INSET courses in higher education institutions (certificates, diplomas, bachelor degrees and master's degrees) are on courses that are likely to fold up as they complete their studies' [4].

Hargreaves's speech provoked a great deal of response [5]. Some of the debate focused on alternative explanations for the perceived lack of impact; for example, the fact that policy decisions are often made without policy-makers considering the available research findings, or significant change is implemented before the results of commissioned evaluations of practice have been published. Other debate focused on explanations for the lack of cumulative research, for example, that overall funding for educational research is reducing as well as diversifying, that university departments can no longer have a long-term view of research and so short-term contracts are the norm, and dedicated research careers are disappearing (Gipps, 1997).

My own personal concern, and what I perceive as a threat to the research community I describe later, is that integrated master's programmes are being broken up into small modules and that the PhD is being supplemented by taught doctorates that favour breadth rather than depth. Like Margaret Brown (1998, p. 133), I am unsure about the value of research training courses if the prospective researcher does not also complete a significant piece of their own research. Margaret says, 'I put a high priority on gaining a PhD, both because it is the best form of research training, and because it represents a substantial piece of work'.

The TTA has taken on board the issue of 'accumulating' research and the newly funded research consortia are to set up data banks. This is a good idea. Unfortunately, the attempt to support the dissemination of some of the higher degree research has resulted in a piecemeal distribution of case studies, with no apparent policy for making a cumulative resource. Currently the TTA is consulting the profession about the dissemination of MA and PhD work. Responses are due back by October 1998. The 3-month period of consultation means that we do not have the usual excuse for not responding. I intend to suggest that the TTA take more account of the edited collections of case studies that many of us have worked hard to publish. It is also worth pointing out that these collections seem to count for little in the research assessment exercise (RAE), and university teachers engage in their production at a personal cost in terms of articles not submitted to academic journals!

The third moral panic I want to mention is that resulting from the publication of the report commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) from James Tooley (1998). Tooley examined the research reported in four leading educational journals [6], judging the quality of the research in terms of his criteria for good research practice. His conclusions were that 'In terms of the 41 articles in the sub-sample 15 are highlighted as showing good practice, with 26 highlighted as not satisfying criteria of good practice, in terms of certain dimensions of the analysis'. From the outset, this research was controversial. Before the publication of the report, the 1997 outgoing BERA President, Donald McIntyre (1997b), lambasted the idea that judgements could be made about educational research on the basis of a sample of articles taken from four research journals. In an editorial response from the *British Educational Research Journal (BERJ)* [7], Ian Stronach & David Hustler have pointed out that Tooley's criticism of educational research does not meet its own criteria for good research practice, particularly in relation to triangulation, consistency, the use of primary sources, the representation of controversy, caution about theoretical sources and relevance. Gaby Weiner [8], a former editor of *BERJ* and the director of a recent Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project on academic journals, says that the report 'offers a restricted, outdated and ultimately highly conservative conception of what "good" research looks like'.

But I don't think that Tooley is the folk devil of this controversy. This role goes to OFSTED's chief inspector because of the conclusions that **Chris Woodhead** appears to draw from the research. While Tooley found that 'almost without exception, the research reviewed ... was relevant to practice and/or policy', Chris Woodhead in the Foreword to the report concluded about educational research that 'Much that is published is, on this analysis, at best no more than an irrelevance and distraction'. Now the 'threat' in Woodhead's comment is obvious. At the risk of 'sour(ing) the climate with ... critiques of government policy, which too often are merely criticism from a different value base' (to quote Hargreaves (1996a, p. 5)), it does seem, as Whitehead (1989a) warned in his presidential address 10 years ago, that the 'truth of power' is likely to triumph over the 'power of truth'. This is particularly true today when the chief inspector of schools appears to misinterpret the findings in a way that suits his own bias.

Ethics

You might say that you cannot blame individuals for being demonised by others and that moral panic is caused by those who do the labelling. I do not agree with this. I think that researchers have a responsibility to research - as a profession and a community - and that this should influence how they act. This is not an issue to do with the problematic of the value-laden basis of educational research or the power relations involved in who decides what counts as legitimate educational knowledge and theory; it is to do with honesty and respect benchmarks of a research profession and a research community. Margaret Brown has already written to the Secretary of State for Education expressing concern about what Woodhead has said. Perhaps we could also profitably learn from the three issues of *Educational Researcher* [9] which have 'considered how members of the educational research community might more effectively communicate with those who have the power to make educational policy' and the editorials that Robert Donmoyer has written about 'talking truth to power'. I believe that it is partly with this in mind that Margaret Brown has proposed that we set up a BERA Commission to draw up a Code of Good Practice in Reporting Educational Research Writing. I hope that we can incorporate into this code of practice some notion of our responsibility to our profession as well as to the research users we serve.

I have argued that educative community through research is at risk due to the crisis of legitimation brought about by the proliferation of research paradigms, called Balkanisation in the USA, and by controversial government policies and their 'demonised' advocates who create the 'moral panic' among the British research community. I am calling for a more measured response to the many changes of our times; one based on a constrained disagreement that is possible because we, the research community, agree to live with our differences; one where we influence government and leaders in education to build 'diversity without rancour' into the research structures and roles they have the power to define. We need to recognise that there are different standards and criteria of judgement that can be used to test the validity of claims to knowledge (Lomax, 1994a); and that different segments of the research community can utilise different approaches so that as a whole we have a form of triangulation that can generate diverse possibilities that research users may try and evaluate in their particular circumstances. I believe that it is possible for individuals and groups with very different perspectives to belong to the same educational community of researchers and nourish each other's differences in seeking ethical, creative and emancipatory solutions through their diverse research to making what McNiff (1992) calls a good social order. In the rest of the paper I want to talk about one very tiny segment of this whole and to share my view about what has made it successful and what I see as the threats to its future. I want to talk about the network of teacher-researchers from schools, colleges and universities that we call the Kingston Hill Action Research Group (KHARG).

Looking Inward

The Kingston Hill Action Research Group (KHARG) is a research community, whose members do research and make it public at conferences and in publications. In the following extract it can speak for itself. The 'we' refers to a number of people from KHARG who collaborated in a symposium about the work of the group at the 1996 British Educational Management and Administration Society (BEMAS) conference.

We are a network of individuals rather than a closed community, a loosely coupled system where individuals act as links between subsystems and associated groups. There is an inner circle of individuals strongly committed to action research as a way of

empowering teachers and bringing about a better education for children; and an outer circle of people who share these values but not necessarily the methodological commitment of the inner circle. Members' interests are diverse. Some of us are working to influence local and national policy in order to retain the form of education we believe is best for our students. Some of us are trying to work collaboratively with each other across different institutions. Some of us are trying to improve our education management practice so that it models our educational values. Some of us are trying to improve our practice as teachers so that our pupils learn better. (Lomax & Selley, 1996).

The composition of the group who agreed this statement is a microcosm of KHARG. Of the group, eight were currently registered for research degrees, seven at Kingston and one elsewhere. Four of these were from schools and four from the university staff. One lecturer was making a presentation with two of her MA students. One teacher, who had completed her PhD at Kingston, was making a presentation with her headteacher and another teacher from the school. Another headteacher, registered for PhD, was presenting with her deputy, who was herself an ex-Kingston MA student. A lecturer and two teachers, none of whom were on accredited courses, were presenting classroom research. Another lecturer was making a presentation with the head of science from a local secondary school and two Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students. Two research students, one a lecturer and one a primary school headteacher, were presenting with a BEd student. The group also included presentations from a visiting research fellow, a Canadian professor doing a sabbatical at Kingston and myself. In all, 25 people from KHARG presented at the BEMAS conference.

The Bedrock

Although not all the people listed are linked to Kingston through accredited study, over two-thirds are. I think this is significant. KHARG has developed over a number of years, initially around a diploma in professional studies in education and a taught master's provision, and more recently around research degrees. I believe that this bedrock of accredited provision has been an essential stabilising part of the more fluctuating reality of a practitioner research community. I recognise that this view runs counter to the idea of 'the university as Dracula, feeding off the virgin souls [selves] of teachers who offer themselves up in the name of reflective practice' (MacLure, 1996), or to the arguments about the colonisation of teacher research by academics. For example, John Elliott & Charles Sarland (1995) favoured funded projects over accredited provision as the bedrock of teacher research. However, although many of you, like John, have experience and evidence of quality practitioner action research within funded projects (Elliott, 1998), few of you have written about an educative community through research such as KHARG.

At a time when university accredited provision for the continuing professional development of school teachers (CPD) is under threat, we need to be very clear about its role and relationship to educational research. Margaret Brown (1998) says 'that action research has developed out of, and is ultimately dependent on, the healthy position of research in our university education departments'. I think this is true, but we should also be aware that accredited provision for the CPD of school teachers has been a crucial plank of support for the educational research community itself. This happens in a number of ways, which include research training for teachers as both researchers and research users; the provision of support and opportunity for teachers to engage in sustained research; making an opportunity for

academics to engage with the dual role of practitioner and researcher; and providing a two-way point of access between classrooms and the academy. Let me reinforce what I am saying here: we need to use our influence to preserve the traditional role of the university in providing a diverse range of 'advanced' courses, particularly courses that are not part of government priorities and ideally courses that are not modularised. This *is for the health of the research community* at large and not just those of us that favour practitioner research. I said earlier that I would identify some of the threats to the Kingston research community. I think that *threat number 1* comes from the way in which the provision of CPD for teachers in university departments of education is at risk, thus threatening the bedrock of KHARG.

Looking Outward

An important part of my idea of a research community is that it should be an arena in which different people can meet, be challenged and do a bit of challenging. But a research community is not just about sharing ideas and creating an 'academic' audience; there are others in the Kingston community who prefer to see its value as a cooperative and non-competitive way of working that acts as an emotional and professional support system. The discourse is the better for having both these views. For example, both these ideas are integrated into the practice of validation (Whitehead, 1989b) that was developed through the MA programme (Lomax, 1994b) and now is an important *rite de passage* in research students' journeys to completion. Our idea of validation is that the researcher should formulate claims about the research and should present evidence to support these claims to a group of supportive but challenging peers. I suggest that this practice is in accordance with Tooley's criteria that alternative positions and explanations are explored, although its success is dependent on the skills and composition of the group-which is related to the practices and expectations of the community within which it operates. This again suggests the importance of the accredited provision that I have called the bedrock, because it is through this provision that we have been able to invite in critical but supportive outsiders. I am talking about external examiners. We were particularly fortunate in the formative years of our community in our dialogue with great action research practitioners like Peter Chambers, John Isaac, Jack Whitehead, Jean McKay, Richard Winter, Tony Ghaye, Bridget Somekh, Marian Dadds and Christine O'Hanlon.

More recently, as Kingston Polytechnic became Kingston University, and we became embroiled in the RAE, we have had the support of Jack Whitehead and Michael Bassey as visiting academics. Jack Whitehead has had a special influence on the action research at Kingston University, and he and I have collaborated closely over the years, to the extent that differences in our perspectives are often overlooked by people who are not close to our work. We have recently put the picture straight in a joint autobiographical paper that sets out our joint and separate positions on action research (Lomax & Whitehead, 1998). I am not sure whether I am pleased or sorry that this paper was rejected by BERJ - but it is to be published shortly in the *Journal of In-service Education* - certainly not one of the four 'elite' journals of the Tooley research! I want to stress the importance of collaborating and working together. I think that Jack would agree that our professional collaboration has helped both of us sustain our commitment to our educational work at times when we might have given up. We model our collaboration, including many a 'constrained disagreement' at the Kingston research group meetings. As steering members of the network we are thus able to 'give permission' to less experienced members of the group to engage in criticism of each others' work without endangering their personal relationship. In this way we have built a critical and self-critical

research community that lacks the rancour found in recent public debates about educational research.

I am not arguing that these practices are sufficient to keep us from being complacent. Earlier I argued a case for a situation where rival standpoints should exist alongside each other, a place of constrained disagreement. Although I seem to have painted a picture of contented consensus, let me assure you that members of the Kingston group frequently venture outside their 'safe house' (Lomax & Selley, 1996; Lomax & Parker, 1996) and many have shown their mettle against the most hostile challenges. Given that many of our members are teachers from schools who are nervous about the wider research community, this is no small victory. But the Kingston Action Research Group represents a small pocket of research. In fact, we struggle to live our values in our practice and to make our research ethical, creative and emancipatory. We are very small fry in the research power game and look to the wider research community *to keep us safe*. *Threat number 2* is that the rhetoric that seems to support work like ours offers little practical support either in the wider research community or in the micro-institutional context.

Partnership with Teachers

I have spoken so far about the processes and politics of a research community and about some of the values and procedures that have helped make KHARG successful as a community. I now want to turn to more substantive issues like the quality of the research that we do, and to refer you to evidence that the research has relevance, impact and is cumulative in an additional sense to the one described by Hargreaves. I would also like to explore my own success criteria of ethics, creativity and emancipation. And I don't want to forget Jean Rudduck's criteria of respect for evidence.

At this point I would like to refer to the paper that Moyra Evans, Helen Morgan and I presented earlier in the conference about our partnership work. The paper describes Helen's research with her sixth form students and sets this in the context of the partnership between Denbigh School and Kingston University, which resulted in the accreditation of the teachers' action research by the University.

Moyra Evans created the Denbigh Action Research Group, of which Helen Morgan is a member, in September 1992. By September 1993 its members could enrol in a new Postgraduate Diploma in Action Research at Kingston University, and by 1996 they could get their school-based action research accredited at master's level. The formation of the action research group was the result of Moyra's own PhD research from 1991-96, for which I had acted as Director of Studies and Jack Whitehead was an external supervisor. She was influenced by the research-based model of action research, where practitioners engaged in their own professional enquiries, developed at Kingston (Lomax, 1994b) and at Bath (Whitehead, 1998). In turn, she has influenced the action research approach at Kingston by pioneering the use of story, both as a tool for staff development and as a form for representing action research (Evans, 1995; 1997; 1998), and from 1994 Moyra and I (with Zoe Parker later) began joint research from a collaborative self-study perspective of our roles as joint tutors for the new offsite variants of the Kingston Practitioner Research MA (Lomax & Evans, 1996; Lomax et al., 1997, 1998). This two-directional relationship is a good example of the 'educative relation' that I think underpins our successful partnership. It depends on 'democratic' values and practices, although it is not without tensions, which we

have brought into the open and where possible integrated into our research accounts. *Threat number 3* is to do with our 'succession' and whether we can encourage others to be proactive in the roles we have taken. This is not helped by the fact that flagship experiments such as this attract little institutional support unless they can be shown to be very cost-effective; or where education departments are located in non-education faculties with other priorities.

We are working on a book [10] about the early days of the Denbigh Research Group and the way in which our partnership work influenced this, which we hope to get to the publishers in 1999. We anticipate that the book will show how the Denbigh-Kingston partnership achieved a change in the hierarchical relationships which often typify working arrangements between universities and schools. We argue that our research communities have shown a courageous commitment to an ideal of scholarship that is based on a more democratic form of knowledge than often finds its place in many institutions of higher education or many schools. It has been said that 'traditional forms of educational research reflect asymmetries of power and knowledge that exploit, disempower, or mystify practitioner and subject populations (Wagner, 1997). Teachers from schools need courage to share their ideas in scholarly forums and to stand firm in their criticism of what they see as inappropriate ways of addressing school knowledge. Teacher educators from academia need courage to engage in research and writing that counts less than other research given present forms of academic appraisal and their consequences. To many teachers it seems that there exists an academic control, through the universities, of knowledge about teaching so that teachers' research is excluded. But little research about university teachers and their teaching is published, which raises the issue of whether a similar conspiracy exists. *Threat number 4* is that academic journal editors and reviewers are predisposed to reject the type of research paper coming from this kind of partnership context.

I want to end this section by considering the impact of our action research on Denbigh School and its teachers. The opportunity for teachers to engage in cumulative research is clear, and some of them are contributing to a corpus of school-based research knowledge that has been tested and is replicated by the same and different teachers across a variety of situations. This knowledge is mainly, but not wholly, contained in a number of dissertations available both at the school and at the University, and containing research accredited for Diploma, MA and PhD studies. This might or might not be David Hargreaves's view of cumulative research, but I would argue, along with Jack Whitehead (1993, p. 81) that we need to ensure that such accumulations of practice-based research knowledge are not lost.

The collection includes Helen Morgan's research into her own practice, which began in 1994. She has completed a postgraduate diploma and an MA and is in the second year of a 4-year PhD programme. I suggest that her thesis will eventually describe research that is cumulative over this 7-year period. You might be interested to know that Helen is being supervised jointly by Moyra Evans (a school-based supervisor) and I (a university-based supervisor). This is certainly innovative in today's climate. Helen has received two grants from the TTA as part of the Teacher Research Grant Scheme. The research reported in her TTA papers is a small part of her action research PhD, which had its genesis in the school-university research partnership and not in the TTA initiative. It was Helen's experience of facilitating a sixth form action research group and her interest in understanding the issues that affected their learning, that led her to gather evidence from all sixth form students in the school about what motivated them and what demotivated them in their studies. The latter, seemingly more traditional research, was submitted for TTA funding. The way in which Helen had to

produce her reports for the TTA (Morgan, 1996, 1997) meant that she was unable to give an account of the wider research, and consequently did not explain that as an action researcher she would be making a case for the 'transferability' rather than the 'generalisability' of her findings (Bassey, 1998). She might also have shown that the research was the outcome of an existing partnership, to which the TTA were very welcome additions. Here, the TTA might advisedly heed Caroline Gipps (1997), who reminds us that the TTA has not invented teacher-researchers, but is recognising a group of people who have learned about research through doing master's or PhD degrees in university departments where we work with teachers all the time. *Threat number 5* is that the different requirements of the TTA and the academic community mean that in a partnership, either the teacher or the academic will be a loser.

Ethics, Creativity and Emancipation

At the beginning of this address I said that educational research should be ethical, creative and emancipatory. I want to describe my own blueprint for this. I recognise that there will be strong resistance to this blueprint by certain individual researchers and groups, but suggest that the three principles could provide a focus for constrained disagreement.

Ethics

I will start with Jean Rudduck's point about respect for evidence. Respect for evidence suggests to me an openness to the unexpected and therefore an incentive to originality. Respect for evidence seems a good defence against some of our more prescriptive research procedures. For this reason, I welcome David Hargreaves's call for evidence based practice, as a rallying point for new or alternative research methodologies that are excluded by some research procedures. I recognise that there are multiple views about what constitutes evidence and which procedures are useful. And some people have the power to enforce their view on others.

I also believe that the ethical principle is protected if we can see ourselves as practising' members of our research communities, where our practice of education is imbued with a practical ethic (Adelman, 1989). Here, I share Hargreaves's appreciation of practitioner research, seeing myself as an educational researcher and a practitioner of education. Surely many of us in BERA see ourselves in this way? [11]

I believe that the important distinguishing feature of educational research is that researchers must be concerned with the purpose of the research, and this concern should include a moral and ethical standpoint that needs to be made very clear. Educational research should be educative research in the sense outlined by Gitlin & Russell (1994), where they suggest that the relation between researcher and researched is dialogical, that the research aims to develop 'voice' among the silenced, that the onus of research should be on the practitioner, that the author's values should be part of the report, and that validity and reliability should be a mutual process rather than a research procedure. Now this is a minefield of possibility for constrained disagreement.

I have argued a similar case to that of Gitlin for educational action research (Lomax, 1994c). Although the conceptual and methodological tools of social science can enhance the quality

of educational research, I believe educational research to be different. I think that confusion over this leads to an identity crisis for educational research and misunderstanding on the part of outsiders. If we are to end this confusion we need to agree that educational research should contribute to defining educational objectives as well as generating evidence about different ways of achieving them. This is a situation where the values of the researcher must influence the collection and interpretation of data and where the researcher is open to learning from the research and should act on this learning. Although I have reservations about the terminology, maybe it is time that we started thinking about a discipline of educational research that would distinguish it from other disciplines.

James Tooley (1998) in his critique of educational research, fails to recognise this distinction between educational research and social science. This is a serious omission in relation to his analysis but also in relation to clarifying the research position from which he operates. For example, he says that it is beyond the remit of his research to evaluate the recommendations about practice and policy of the three journal articles he samples. He says, 'If any reader wished to object to such research on the grounds that they don't like these particular implications for policy and practice, then they would have to go beyond the model of good practice in educational research, to a theory of good practice in education itself' (p. 64). I would say that it is not possible to have a model of good practice in educational research without including a theory of good practice in education. One of the reasons why I am committed to educational action research is that the approach I have adopted models a theory of good educational practice.

Creativity

Let me turn to my second heading under which BERA members might practice constrained disagreement, *creativity*. There are some interesting new ideas from the USA, such as self-study (Pinnegar & Russell, 1995; Hamilton, 1998), which resonate very well with new developments here such as the new *International Journal of Reflective Practice*, of which Tony Ghaye is executive editor. Ken Zeichner, in his 1998 vice presidential address to Division K at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) said that 'the birth of the self-study in the teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research'. Detractors might liken self-study to those 'reflexive' accounts of educational research that Tooley says have only a tenuous relevance to policy and practice. Although I would not necessarily disagree with Tooley's remarks about the three papers he critiques, I do object to his conclusion, which expresses doubts about the constructive influence of reflexive accounts in general. Both reflexive and reflective accounts need to be supported by rigorous self-study, such as that advocated by the Self Study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP), which is one of the Special Interest Groups or SIGs of AERA.

I have only just returned from the 1998 S-STEP Conference. The wonderful thing about S-STEP work is the way it encourages new and innovative research practices. This year a group from Kingston and Bath took up Eliot Eisner's (1993) idea that different forms of representation enable the creation and communication of different forms of meaning. Usually, forms of representation are seen as ways of presenting research that use non-traditional media, such as story, pictures, drama, etc. Although this focus on the communicative potential is important, I am also interested in the way in which forms of representation encourage meaning to be created. I have noticed that research students whose

thinking seems 'blocked' can be 'unblocked' when they are encouraged to use a different form of representation to the traditional academic writing. I have also noticed that when their meaning is represented in this new form, I have a more direct relation to their work. My theory is that both these aspects of representation, that is the focus on creating meaning and the focus on communicating meaning, are dialectical. Creating a representation opens up the living contradiction of one's practice to oneself; while sharing the representation opens up the possibility of dialogue with others.

In some recent writing Eisner (1997) talks about the personal and the political implications of using new forms of representation. He pinpoints the political when he argues that one of the promises of new forms of representation is that they stimulate the reframing of public knowledge through encouraging new ways of seeing things, inspiring multiple interpretation and allowing us to exploit individual aptitudes that have tended to be ignored as research skills. He pinpoints the personal; in the 'promise' that the new forms of representation encourage us to recognise our 'human feeling' as an aid to understanding, they provide a sense of particularity that encourages authenticity, and they encourage empathy. What I experienced and recounted in my paper (Lomax, 1998) for the S-STEP conference, was that the different forms of representation enabled me to make a direct connection to the research they represented rather than engage in a symbolic relationship with it. The forms of representation used by the group were intended to be evocative in encouraging their audience to consider multiple interpretation of educative relationships. I will share two examples from the work of the Kingston research students. The form of Madeleine Mohammed's (1998) representation was a 'cameo' which she defines as 'a brief, affective sketch of a moment that captures a small but momentarily perfect image of realisation'. By sharing powerful cameos she showed the affective and cognitive dimensions of the tutor/student teacher relationship. She had evidence that the relationships could be emotionally negative as well as emotionally positive, and where they were emotionally negative, they could also be cognitively challenging.

For Kay Johnson (1998), the form of her representation was the metaphor of a 'player' and a 'play within a play'. The 'play within' provided the space in which the interaction of the particular players was described, while the 'play without' provided a way of clarifying the research method. Kay used the metaphor of player to signal 'kinship' and a commitment to act, and the play within (which was constructed around videos and other data) to show the somatic, non-verbal quality of attention that the teacher and her five assistants gave to their 10 students with severe, multiple and profound learning difficulties. It was clear from these examples that 'human feeling' had aided rather than polluted the research and both forms of representation were illustrative of the way in which new approaches can encourage the exploitation of individual aptitudes that have tended to be ignored as research skills.

Emancipation

I would like to end this penultimate part of my address with a reference to my third principle of research, that it should be emancipatory. Instead of making an argument I would like to provide a recent testimony from Iain Burnside (1998) who is the deputy head teacher at Whitefields Schools and Centre, a large special school catering for a wide range of learning difficulties. Describing the partnership between Kingston and Whitefield in providing an MA programme, he wrote the following in the School of Education Research Newsletter.

What persuaded Lesley and myself to take part was the real professional growth that we had witnessed in the students of the previous year. These teachers investigated a range of areas from within their own practice. They actively discussed their work with colleagues in ways that led them to think more analytically about their professional concerns and their action research led them to improve, in a fundamental way, their professional practice. ... The total involvement and passion of these teachers with respect to their individual research projects was, to us at Whitefield, astounding.

The process of professional change undertaken by the students on the MA programme in turn challenged Keith and myself, as tutors, to rethink our beliefs about practitioner research and our contribution to teacher education in the field of special educational needs. We are currently engaged in an ongoing struggle, involving a process of clarification and reclarification of our values and beliefs, as we attempt to move from a rational empirical view of professional development to one predicated on supportive and collaborative activity in which teachers are encouraged to take control of their own learning. This thinking may not appear particularly revelatory to the members of KHARG, but to us this has been the most significant challenge to our beliefs about our role as school based teacher educators.

Some of the concepts and vocabulary of action research have started to influence policies within the school itself. We are now reviewing and modifying our procedures for both educational programme planning for individual pupils and curriculum development planning to include more explicit evidence-based evaluation procedures and a formal process of validation.

Much has been written about the benefits of partnership between HEIs [higher education institutions] and schools. ... For staff at Whitefield however, the success of the MA partnership has been much more far reaching than merely the joint delivery of an action research programme. Through our involvement in an extended 'community of learners' ... we have been encouraged to critically analyse our thinking on teacher education and school management and this has begun to have a fundamental influence on our practice.

What Will I Do as President of BERA?

I have thought long and hard about how I can contribute to BERA's development as an educative community during my year of office.

My first priority will be to model how a member of such a community would act and relate to others. At the end of the year I would like to judge my contribution to BERA in terms of the number of educative relationships I have been able to develop, facilitate or be part of. My view of an educative relationship with you, is one where there will be learning and improvement that involves both of us, independently and reciprocally. I would aspire to being consciously reflective so that I am aware of how you are affected by my actions and expectations. I would aspire to be consciously reflexive and aim to see myself through your eyes. I would hope to make this reflective and reflexive stance reciprocal and shared. By a *reciprocal* relationship, I mean a relationship where each side is equally willing to teach and to learn, as opposed to a relationship where one always teaches and the other always learns. By shared I mean where each side is willing to share their thoughts about themselves and

others even when this means exposing their vulnerability. I think that an educative relationship involves a striving towards reciprocity, where differences between individuals need to be overcome.

In terms of practical plans I hope to work with colleagues on Council to facilitate or support a number of high profile regional research meetings to take place each month in 1999. I intend that these meetings should generate definitive position papers supported by bibliographic and resource information about research throughout the UK that can form the basis of BERA's Internet archive. I hope that these meetings will draw together the different research interests of our diverse membership and encourage participation from other associations and societies representing the subjects and disciplines on whose expertise we draw so heavily. I have had some response from people wanting to participate in this initiative, I have arranged funding towards the cost of research for the publications, and established that the BERA Internet archive will be available to house the finished research papers.

The purpose of this initiative, on the eve of the millennium, is to demonstrate that BERA members' research constitutes the definitive state of British educational research; that the research constituency of BERA can work together from their strength of diverse standpoints within a framework that is ethical, creative and emancipatory; that different constituencies of educational research: academic and practitioner; qualitative and quantitative; practice, theory or policy focused, etc., make a different but equally valuable contribution to the furtherance of education in its many contexts and forms. From this list of purposes it should be clear that I want to reconcile the tensions that could lead us towards the fragmenting or Balkanising of educational research.

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NOTE

- [11] HUSTLER, D. & STRONACH, I. *BERJ* Editorial response to *Education Research: an OFSTED critique* by J. Tooley with D. Darby, <beramail@nottingham.ac.uk > .
- [2] *Research Intelligence*, 64, p. 24.
- [3] The DFEE Enquiry into Educational Research was commissioned from the institute of Employment Studies, University of Sussex.
- [4] *Research Intelligence*, 64, pp. 15-16.
- [5] See *Research Intelligence*, 57, 58, 59.
- [6] The journals were identified as the top three journals in educational research published in the UK on the basis of a recent table of impact factors from the Social Sciences Citation Index. Additionally he looked at *BERJ*.
- [7] BERA members can access the response on <beramail@nottingham.ac.uk > .
- [8] WEINER, G. (1998) *The Tooley Report* <beramail@nottingham.ac.uk > August.
- [9] *Educational Researcher*, 25(7); 25(8); 26(5).
- [10] EVANS, M., LOMAX, P. & MORGAN, H. (1998) *Telling Stories of Professional Development: a contribution to a new methodology for action research*. In preparation.
- [11] There are educational researchers who are not directly concerned with providing education, but who apply the ethical principle in their practical relations with those who contribute to their data.

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