Creating Education through Research

MICHAEL BASSEY, *Faculty of Education, Nottingham Polytechnic*

Three Ways of Creating Education

Fifteen years ago, when I was appointed Reader in Education at what was then Trent Polytechnic, I went to the Director of Education of Nottinghamshire and asked him what educational research we could carry out from the Polytechnic that would be helpful to him. His answer was brief: 'I don't use research, I just play my hunches'. That is certainly one way of creating education: by playing hunches, by using intuition without challenge and without monitoring the consequences. I guess most of us work this way sometimes.

A second way of creating education is the historical way. It entails repeating what has been done before: basing today's action on the way it was done last week or last year. Again I guess that most of us work this way quite often, arguing that there is no time to do otherwise. Certainly, as organiser of this conference, I have used BERA's traditional model of symposia and individual papers in designing the programme and not even challenged the need for a Presidential Address!

But there is a third way. It is creating education by asking questions and searching for evidence. It is creating education by asking about intentions, by determining their worth, by appraising resources, by identifying alternative strategies, and by monitoring and evaluating outcomes. It is creating education through systematic and critical enquiry. It is creating education through research.

Yes, it is slow and time-consuming and most of the time we cannot afford to do it. But nevertheless, it is the most potent way forward. I don't have to tell this Association that creating education through research is the most effective way of creating education; but it is something which we have to keep telling the outside world. In the past there has been too much slavish repetition in education following the historical model; today there is too much blind playing of hunches. For tomorrow we need more recognition of the power of research in creating worthwhile education.

I hope you share my view that many of the papers being presented at this conference demonstrate the potential of research for creating worthwhile education. The question is who listens? This is something I wish to return to later.

In this lecture I intend to give a synoptic sketch of the processes of educational research in the 1990s and then to address my title of 'Creating Education through Research' by exploring the relationship of educational research to political action. I shall conclude with five suggestions for action by the research community which we represent.

A Map of Educational Research in the 1990s

For many years I have been fascinated by the variety of research activities in which people engage. What a curious gathering of people come together under the banner of research, with different interests, different methodologies, even different vocabularies. My concern is that there is a tendency for each group to reject the others saying 'we are the true researchers. We have seen the light; they are but parasites on our back'. I believe this is unhelpful; we need to accept diversity of practice and march together in order to be effective in the world of education.

The common concern of all educational researchers in my view is the carrying out of systematic and critical enquiry on educational topics within a twin ethic of respect for truth and respect for persons. These are the cardinal principles to which I believe all educational researchers subscribe. As to what is meant by 'education' I shall return later.

By *systematic enquiry* I mean a process of finding out which is conducted not on a random or arbitrary basis but in the light of some theoretical perspective. By *critical enquiry* I imply that perceptions, interpretations, explanations and conclusions are subject to questioning which challenges them both logically and ethically.

If you will indulge me for a little, I want to draw a map of the land of educational research as I see it. It is a land of widely different regions, inhabited by people of different cultures, different aspirations, and sometimes different languages which are hardly understood by others. A land of plateaux which are easy to traverse and of mountains which are difficult to climb. A land where in places the climate is conducive to research, but elsewhere is arid and researchers need to work hard to scratch findings from the soil. But a land where 'systematic and critical enquiry' is written over every doorway. I hope you will forgive the simplicity of argument by dichotomy and trichotomy which I am going to use, for my land of research is categorised by three realms: two categories of worker, two kinds of employment, and three levels of communication. I know that there can be in-between positions, but it is simpler to present a case in terms of polarities.

The Three Realms of Research in Education: empirical research, reflective research and creative research

I suggest that there are three realms of research in education; empirical research, reflective research and creative research.

By *empirical research* I mean the kind of research where data collection is centre stage; where data is systematically collected by strict procedures, critically analysed, interpreted and conclusions drawn. There is a tendency to see this as the only form of research, but I argue that there are two other forms.

Reflective research is the term I use to describe systematic and critical thinking in which the findings of empirical research are the starting point for review and argument about educational issues. Many articles in the literature are of this form. Fieldworkers in the sweat and toil of data collecting may castigate these writings as the work of armchair theorists, but this is no more than a replay of the age-old battle between doers and thinkers; both are needed.

By *creative research* I mean the devising of new systems, the development of novel solutions, and the formulation of new ideas, by systematic and critical enquiry. This is a realm of enquiry which is often excluded from research listings, but in my view, provided that it is carried out

with system and criticism, it can justly be described as research. The endeavours of the National Curriculum working parties come in this category. Their ideas are yet to be subjected to the rigorous evaluation of empirical research, and they may have been put together hurriedly, but in so far as the programmes of study and attainment targets were devised systematically and critically, the work entailed was research.

My reason for identifying these three realms of educational research is to emphasise the notion that all enquiries which are conducted systematically and critically are research. It follows that the army of educational researchers is a large one. In practice, of course, these three realms overlap; the boundaries are somewhat vague. For example, every empirical researcher engages in some reflection, and every reflective researcher has to read the literature in order to obtain data to think about.

The Two Categories of Workers: those who seek to understand and those who seek to change

I suggest that educational researchers work for one of two grand purposes. One is to *understand* some aspect of education; the other is to *change* some aspect of education.

The first category of research workers have the purpose of trying to describe, interpret or explain what is happening without inducing any change They are trying to portray the topic of their enquiry as it is and without disturbing it. Their aim is to give a theoretical account which links with existing theoretical ideas. Of course, teachers or administrators may use the findings to initiate change, but the researchers themselves aim to complete the enquiry without changing the situation. Until recently this was the only category. It is usually carried out by outsiders, i.e. people who are not engaged directly in the educational practice under study.

The second category of research workers have the purpose of trying to induce some change which they see as beneficial. Of course, in order to do this it is first necessary for them to understand what is happening, but beyond that they are using systematic and critical enquiry in attempts to improve the practical situation. This is, of course, commonly known as action research and is a relatively recent development. It is usually carried out by insiders, i.e. people who are directly teaching or administering the practice under study.

The Two Kinds of Employment of Empirical Researchers: the search for generalisations and the study of singularities

Several years ago I put papers to this conference suggesting that the search for generalisations and the study of singularities were two quite different forms of research enquiry. The search for generalisation requires the investigation of large populations, usually studied by appropriate sampling, and by intention leads to statements which can be used to predict what will occur in other situations. The study of a singularity can be investigation or something quite small. (Robin Campbell in 1981 reported on the reading strategies engaged in by one infant teacher during a 3 minute 25 seconds period of observation.) Clearly the study of a singularity cannot be used to predict probabilities but, if it can be related to other situations, it may be valuable in suggesting possibilities for future action.

These two kinds of employment refer essentially to empirical researchers.

The Three Levels of Communication: the personal, the informal interactive and the formal dissemination levels

As a matter of speculation I would like to put forward the idea that researchers have three levels of engaging in criticism in relation to other researchers.

Level One is the *personal level,* where one is working more or less alone in designing an enquiry, collecting data, analysing and interpreting it, drawing tentative conclusions, and reflecting on the process and outcomes. At this level each researcher talks to the self and this may often provide the most virulent critiques of the work.

Level Two is the *informal interactive level,* where the enquiry is shared with selected others (orally or in writing) for critical appraisal of its meaningfulness. In my view this is often a neglected level, researchers jumping from One to Three without the benefit of peer critique. It isn't necessarily the fault of the researcher. It may be that colleagues can't spare the time to think deeply about the work, or are reluctant to challenge it.

Level Three is *the formal dissemination level* where an account of the enquiry and its findings is published in the literature: although still open to critical challenge, the findings tend to be taken by readers as fact. In my view this is the level where there is much room for improvement. Too much reporting of educational research is poorly expressed, a point which I intend to take up later.

This may sound like a neat and tidy account of educational research, but in truth it is only topographical, an account of the surface, the view of the landscape observer. What lies underneath? What of the underlying structures of hard rock and soft rock, of anticlines and synclines, of faults and intrusions, of pockets of molten rock waiting to be expelled in volcanic eruptions? I refer to the belief systems which underlie our actions.

The Deep Structure of Educational Research in the 1990s: some of the belief systems

Beliefs about the Nature of Reality

To educational researchers perhaps the most obvious set of belief systems are concerned with the nature of reality, for, in striving to understand, researchers seem to work from different beliefs about the nature of reality. Of the various terms used to describe these beliefs I have chosen the terms positivist paradigm and interpretive paradigm. Researchers working within the *positivist paradigm* see reality as separate from themselves and expect investigators to have the same perceptions of shared phenomena and thus common understandings.

Researchers working within the *interpretive paradigm* see reality as a social construct and so do not necessarily expect other investigators to have the same perceptions or understandings of shared phenomena.

Beliefs about the Nature of Education

In the 1960s and 1970s there was much debate about what education means; today the concept of 'education' seems to be simply located within the positivist paradigm, as though we all give it the same meaning. Yet this is clearly not the case.

I suggest that it is proper and valuable for everyone who is arguing for change in education, be they researcher, teacher, administrator or politician, from time to time to write down the platform of their beliefs about children, teachers and education. (The concept of a "platform of beliefs" is a useful one introduced by Kottkamp [1990]) For example, what are one's beliefs about why some children are more able than others and what should teachers do about this?

With some trepidation, I am going to set out my present belief system on the nature of education. I do so in the spirit of offering it for criticism and of searching for new insights. It draws heavily on the writing of M. V. C. Jeffreys in a book written over 40 years ago entitled *Glaucon: an enquiry into the aims of education* (1950), but also includes the concept of the 'worthwhile' used by R. S. Peters in *Ethics and Education* (1966). My definition is this:

> Education is first, the nurture of personal growth towards worthwhile living, and, secondly, the conservation, transmission and renewal of worthwhile culture.

This is, of course, only an outline definition, and as such is one that I guess many people can share. The crunch comes when we try to define 'worthwhile living' and 'worthwhile culture'. It is here that the arguments begin, for there are many different views of what is worthwhile living and worthwhile culture.

To illustrate the power and complexity of this approach let me expose my own position on what constitutes 'worthwhile living'. It is expressed in the idea of conviviality, which I have developed from the writings of Ivan Illich (1973) and E. F. Schumacher (1973).

> Conviviality has a profound meaning concerned with the nature of human life. A convivial person is trying to achieve a state of deep and satisfying harmony with the world, which gives joyful meaning to life.

> Convivial people are striving for harmony with their environment, with their fellows, and with their self.

> Striving for harmony with their *physical environment* convivial people use it for their needs, but do not exploit it: they conserve the land and the living things which the land supports and, seeing themselves as stewards, aim to safeguard the land for future generations.

> Striving for harmony with their *intellectual environment* convivial people seek to explore and to understand the world of ideas and, where appropriate, to relate them purposefully to the world of action.

> Striving for harmony with their *fellows* they seek to co-operate rather than to compete with them; they neither exploit them nor are exploited by them: they try to live in concord with their fellows - to love and be loved.

> Striving for harmony with *the self* convivial people have sufficient understanding of both their rationality and their emotions to develop their talents effectively; by using their talents harmoniously in relation to society and their physical and intellectual environment they become self-reliant and thus experience the joy of convivial life.

I believe this to be a true statement of where I stand. I know that a number of my actions as a teacher and as a researcher trace back to it. I also know that my recent decision to take partial retirement from Nottingham Polytechnic stems from the contradiction between this personal position and the new imperative in higher education for income generation. It doesn't take much

insight to recognise this statement as politically green - perhaps you will say in two senses of the word!

This brings me bluntly to the point that the edifice of education, and therefore of educational research, rests inevitably, if uncomfortably, on the bed rock of political ideology.

Educational Research and Policy-making in Education

The advance of action research, which is now happening all over the country, is beginning to make an impact on the classroom work of teachers, and to a lesser extent on the work of administrators. Nottinghamshire LEA is but one example of an education authority which has recognised the power of action research and built it into In-service Education and Training (INSET) planning. I am sure that Peter Housden, present Director of Education for Nottinghamshire, would not tell me that he has no use for research - and only plays his hunches!

The Discourse of Derision about Education

Unfortunately the same is not the case nationally. The present Government and their advisers have treated educational researchers, among other educational professionals, to what Stephen Ball calls a discourse of derision. Let me quote from his *Politics and Policy Making in Education* (1990)*:*

> This discourse of derision acted to debunk and displace not only specific words and meanings - progressivism and comprehensivism, for example - but also the speakers of these words, those 'experts', 'specialists' and 'professionals' referred to as the 'educational establishment'. These privileged speakers have been displaced, their control over meaning lost, their professional preferences replaced by ... parental choice, the market, efficiency and management. A new discursive regime has been established and with it new forms of authority. (p.18)

It has been constantly reiterated that standards are falling, that many teachers are either weak or subversive, that important subjects in schools are neglected, that teacher education is failing, and that the LEAs are conniving in this deterioration. These utterances, coming from a variety of right-wing think-tanks and regularly headlined in certain newspapers, have been in the main unsubstantiated assertion and argument-by-selected-instance. The question of what counts as significant evidence has been ignored. As Ball says: "The role of expert knowledge and research is regarded as less dependable than political intuition and commonsense accounts of what people want" (p. 32). This discourse of derision has served to prepare the ground for ideological change. Ball stresses that the ideological change which our education system and schools are experiencing is not simple. He refers to: "the messy realities of influence, pressure, dogma, expediency, conflict, compromise, intransigence, resistance, error, opposition and pragmatism in the policy process" (p.9).

Elitism

Ball goes on to describe the present discourse of educational change as one of "elite-pluralism" and he illustrates the conflict within the government and its administration in these words:

> Old conservative interests are at odds with new, manufacturing capital with finance capital, the Treasury with the DTI, the neo-liberals with the neo-conservatives, wets with drys, Elizabeth House with Number 10, the DES with itself, Conservative Central Office with the Shires. (p. 19)

Stephen Ball is one of the few researchers in the realm of empirical research (he interviewed 49 educational administrators and politicians) who have tried to understand contemporary change in education. Another is Stewart Ranson who, in the early 1980s, reported on an interview with an anonymous DES civil servant who said:

> We are beginning to create aspirations which society cannot match ... When young people drop off the education production line and cannot find work at all, or [cannot find] work which meets their abilities and expectations, then we are only creating frustration with perhaps disturbing social consequences. We have to select: to ration the educational opportunities so that society can cope with the output of education ... If we have a highly educated and ideal population we may possibly anticipate more serious conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place.

Brian Simon, in his widely read book *Does Education Matter* (1985, p.223), from which I draw the quotation, has made strong use of this sinister perspective.

Meritocracy

I would like to relate that to a book written much earlier, in 1958, by Michael Young called *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. (To stay with my typology I see it as in the realm of creative research, while Brian Simon's book is in the realm of the reflective.) *The Rise of the Meritocracy* purports to be an essay written in 2034 about the crisis in education!

Young saw, more clearly than anybody at that time, the way that education was going. He saw the creeping trend towards a two-class system based on intellectual merit, with an upper class - a meritocracy - enjoying privilege and power as a consequence of their trained intelligence, and a lower class, of inferior intelligence, educated for the menial tasks of society. Young was wrong about the form of government intervention which would produce the meritocracy, for he predicted that grammar school teachers would be paid similar salaries to industrial scientists as a result of legislation! He didn't see that market forces would be used as the engine of change. But he was right in predicting that education would be used to create a meritocratic elite and that egalitarian approaches to education would wane.

> It did not matter much about the defective, maladjusted and delinquent ... It did not matter so much about the secondary modern schools. In an ideal world, not hampered by shortage of resources, the unfortunate could have large sums spent on them too. But it was not, has not been, nor ever will be, an ideal world. The choice was between priorities, and there was no doubt how the decision had to go. What mattered most were primary schools, where the pupils were being divided into the gifted and the ungifted: and, above all, the grammar schools where the gifted received their due. They had to have more generous endowments. And they got them. (p.48)

Let me rewrite that in the language of today, remembering that Young's fable purports to be a historical account written in 2034.

It did not matter so much about special needs children ... It did not matter so much about the local authority secondary schools. The choice was between priorities. What mattered most were the primary schools, where the children were being divided into the gifted and the ungifted by National Curriculum assessment; and, above all, the grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges where the gifted would receive their due. They had to have more generous endowments. And they got them - to the tune of £105 million worth of capital expenditure by 1991 for the city technology colleges.

There was a time when many of us felt that politics should be kept out of education: we now know that that is not possible. In particular, as researchers, we need to understand that the conclusions which we may draw from painstaking researches can be irrelevant to those politicians who have different fundamental beliefs about the future of society to our own.

The argument for elitism is that as a nation we need highly trained managers, scientists and technologists who can compete successfully with the other advanced industrial nations in order to maintain economic expansion. But the other industrial nations are saying the same - and we live on a small planet with finite resources, where a large proportion of the world population have a standard of living nothing like that which we already enjoy. For how long can the rich strive to get richer? For myself, as a convivialist, I want to see the industrial countries adopt steady state rather than expansionist economics, and to see the competition for who can create the most wealth replaced by collaboration towards the goal of convivial harmony. This perspective, of course, underwrites my educational thinking.

The Divide between Left and Right

I suggest that the really significant political divide is about the share out of resources. Gandhi said that there is sufficient in the world for each person's need, there is insufficient for each one's greed. The major divide in political thinking is about where the boundary lies between need and greed, and about what mechanisms should serve to distribute resources in relation to need and greed.

The left look for an equitable distribution on moral grounds; they argue for centralised planning to achieve this, otherwise the aspiration of some individuals overrides the need of others. The right believe that a disproportionate distribution is necessary on pragmatic grounds of efficiency and the need for progress; they argue for market forces to achieve this, thus fostering the aspiration of some individuals to create an elite. The left see the unbridled working of market forces as immoral: the right see centralised planning as humanly impractical.

How does this affect education? If you subscribe to the ideology of the left you see education in part as a means of learning to share resources. If you subscribe to the ideology of the right, you see education in part as the learning of skills and knowledge which enable people to compete successfully for resources. Thus the left seeks a child-centred education in which co-operation is valued and the right seeks a knowledge-and-skills education in which competition is valued.

If a teacher asks a child to share 10 sweets between five children the correct answer for the left is two sweets each, while the correct answer for the right is four have one sweet each and the fifth child has six. If the teacher then asks, 'How did you work it out?' one answer is 'by fair shares', and the other is 'by market forces'. I don't believe that this is a particularly naive analysis; naivety is when we forget that far right ideology underpins the thinking of many of our present ministers.

When researchers have collected painstakingly the evidence to show that the operations of Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) at Key Stage One has exhausted the teachers, has told many of them nothing that they did not already know about their children, has deprived the children of some of the normal experience of infant education, and that teacher assessment rather than SAT assessment is the valuable development, we nevertheless should not be surprised that the Secretary of State says that SATs will continue. He has made his position quite clear in deciding that Key Stage One next year shall also include Level Four of the National Curriculum core subjects: his prime concern about the SATs is that they should be a device for identifying the most able children, the children who will be most successful in acquiring the knowledge and skills which will enable them to compete successfully for the resources of the future.

Likewise we should not be surprised that recently the Prime Minister[*] rejected the accumulated examining wisdom of recent years when he talked of

> getting GCSE back to being an externally assessed exam, which is predominantly written. I am attracted to the idea that for most subjects a maximum of 20 per cent of the marks should be obtained from course-work... We short change our brightest children if we devalue the currency of the exams they take. (Major. 1991)

From the stance of the right this is quite rational, for it focuses on the education of the elite. The same is true of the Government's rejection of proposals to broaden A-level studies.

The Need for Research into Beliefs

Perhaps at this stage you are saying: if decisions about the national educational system are so firmly influenced by a particular ideology what hope is there for researchers who are of a different political persuasion? The answer is that there has perhaps never been a time when it is so important to use the systematic and critical processes of research to tease out the truth. And the truth which we need to explore lies not only in the outcomes of actions but in the minds of the actors. More needs to be known about the beliefs of those who wield power and who plan for the future. Ideologies need to be made overt and explained; ideas need to be subject to public scrutiny so that they can be debated, criticised, and developed.

I submit that research has a vital role in supporting democratic values - in teasing out what is happening in our society and communicating the findings to as wide an audience as possible in order that the future can be determined by the democratic will of the people and not by the autocratic will of an elite.

An Ethic of Respect for Democratic Values

Earlier I referred to the ethic of respect for truth and the ethic of respect for persons. I have come to the view that as researchers we need a third ethic, *an ethic of respect for democratic values.*

In *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945) Karl Popper described a democratic, or open, society as one in which the adults of the community use their intelligence to try to order their affairs. In the complex societies of today, research is part of the key to that apparently simple phrase 'use their intelligence'. It implies the freedom to investigate and to ask questions, the

---

[*] John Major was Prime Minister when the address was given.

freedom to express ideas and to criticise the ideas of others, the freedom to give and to receive information, the freedom to publish research findings without restriction other than that imposed by the ethics of respect for truth and respect for persons, and the freedom to do these things without endangering oneself or one's livelihood. In a democratic society, effective decision-making requires appropriate knowledge: in other words, in terms of education, it means creating education through research.

But we cannot assume that these freedoms exist. When the results of a £21 million research endeavour, the Language in the National Curriculum Project, are denied publication by the Government because of a disagreement between ministers and researchers on how grammar should be taught in schools, and when an HMI report on the value of the proposals is suppressed by the DES (*Times Educational Supplement.* 5 July 1991. p.3) it is time for the research community to speak out about the importance of the freedom to give and to receive information.

When national agencies in contracting researchers put restrictions on the right of the researchers to publish their findings it is time to ask why. Is it because they doubt the competence of the researchers - in which event why did they give them the contract? Is it because they want to protect the public from whatever truth is discovered - which is unacceptably paternalistic. Or is it because they want to be able to protect themselves from any public or governmental criticism which may arise from the findings? And if such criticism is due, by what right do they seek to suppress the evidence?

Researchers must have freedom to give and to receive information.

Communicating the Findings of Educational Research

But the freedom to be able to communicate is only part of the problem of effective communication of research findings. Here I find it necessary to make two straight criticisms of much of the writing done by ourselves as researchers.

First, too many writers try to generalise their findings beyond the confines of their data. Thus the conclusions of a study of, say, the reading abilities of 100 8-year-olds in five schools, or perhaps of all the 8-year-olds in one LEA, tend to be expressed as though they refer to all 8-year-olds everywhere. The error lies in failing to recognise that there is enormous variation in educational practice - from child to child, from classroom to classroom, from school to school, from LEA to LEA, from region to region, and from year to year. It is folly to extrapolate findings from one population to another. Referring back to my map of educational research, the merit of recognising the distinction between search for generalisation and study of a singularity is that it reduces the likelihood of falling into this error. Of course, the vast majority of researches in education are studies of singularities.

My second criticism is that too many research papers are expressed in clumsy English, overloaded with terminology that is familiar to few people, poorly structured, long-winded, and in general written from the perspective of the writer without concern for the audience.

As one suggestion for reducing the turgidity of much research writing, I suggest that three of the traditional academic games of name-dropping could themselves be dropped. These I call 'genuflecting', 'sandbagging', and 'kingmaking'. Let me illustrate these terms with this piece of invented report writing.

> Piaget (1926) showed that children develop in stages and so it is no surprise to find that libraries for children are usually organised according to levels of complexity for readers (Adams, 1980; Brown, 1982; Collins. 1988). In planning this investigation we started with the view stated by Davidson (1981, p.1) that any collection of writings is a library. In designing our questionnaire, we used a modified form of that used by Edwards (1987) ...

I describe the reference to Piaget as *genuflection* (meaning ritualistic obeisance to one of the founding parents of educational theory), the references to Adams, Brown and Collins as *sandbagging* (meaning adding to a statement inert defences to make it look secure), and the reference to Davidson as *kingmaking* (meaning giving undue authority to somebody by citing their unresearched utterance). On the other hand the reference to Edwards is appropriate and necessary; indeed it would be plagiarism not to cite her. The purpose of references should be to support the claim to knowledge of the paper, not the claim to being well-read of the author!

In terms of the three levels of communication of research findings which I described earlier it seems that too many papers pass directly from level one (the personal level) to level three (the formal dissemination level) without being subject to rigorous criticism at level two (the informal interactive level). The action researchers' use of the *critical friend* is as pertinent for those who seek to understand as for those who seek to change, and the criticism needs to focus on the style of communication as much as on the construction of ideas.

In addition to the traditional expectation that researchers will communicate their findings through the academic literature to fellow researchers, I submit that an ethic of democratic values leads to the view that researchers should also take responsibility for communicating their findings to the wider public. One of the positive things to take from the Government's Citizen's Charter is that parents are to be given more information about schools. Let us build on that and share the understandings which come from our researches with parents and the general public.

Educational Research and the Profession of Teaching

This leads me to refer to the relationship between educational research and the profession of teaching. The most reprehensible aspect of the discourse of derision is the way in which the concept of professionalism has been maligned.

This could not have happened if the concept of the reflective practitioner, as portrayed by Donald Schon (1983) and others, had been more widespread. I refer to the distinction which Schon draws between the traditional view of an 'expert professional' and the modern view of a 'reflective professional'.

The *expert professional* maintains a distance from the client. He or she is presumed to be able to understand the client's needs and is expected to solve the client's problems, with minimal involvement of the client. In return the expert expects unquestioning deference and respect from the client, as well as a substantial fee!

In total contrast the *reflective professional* works with the client in trying to make sense of the client's needs and shares knowledge as needed to try to tackle the client's problems. He or she has no need of a facade to express professionalism. It is obvious from the purposeful interaction with the client.

11

Because so many teachers have strived to work in this latter way with both young people and their parents there is much consternation and anger at the attacks which have been made on their professionalism. But all is not lost.

One of the brightest hopes for the future of education in England and Wales lies in the proposals for the creation of a General Teaching Council. Scotland, of course, has had one for a long time. At the beginning of July, John Tomlinson, chairman of the planning group for a General Teaching Council, said this:

> The creation by Statute of a General Teaching Council would be the act of a mature democratic society, cognizant of the value of its education system. We would have given our teachers and those directly responsible for their work a measure of self-determination in a context of public visibility of the ways in which the consequent responsibilities were carried out. We would have encouraged that quality essential to the educational process, namely the conscience and judgment of the teacher. We need teachers for the things they do which neither the State nor the parent nor the student unaided can ever do. We therefore need teachers who are properly confident in their knowledge and skills and caring about their work and we need to bring them to account for their work in ways that are deliberately designed to increase its chance of being successful. A General Teaching Council would be only one part of the education system I envisage. But it would be an essential part.

I welcome this proposal and draw attention to it because undoubtedly the endeavours of educational researchers, in the way in which I have been describing them during the last 50 minutes, would effectively support and illuminate the functions of such a Council. Educational research is another essential part of the education system and close links between the research community and the future General Teaching Council are vital.

Endpiece

I am grateful for the honour which the Association has done me in choosing me as the next President. If my lecture has but skated lightly over a large number of deep and problematic issues my defence (1990) is that you only get one shot at a presidential address and I wanted to cover a lot of ground which I think is pertinent to BERA! I would like to end by making five suggestions.

- First, that we recognise the diversity of activities that are portrayed on my map as all being legitimate and worthwhile aspects of the edifice of educational research.

- Secondly, that we do not turn our backs on the political dimension of education but use our skills and techniques to explore the beliefs which underpin actions.

- Thirdly, that we examine closely the notion that the ethics of respect for truth and respect for persons should be joined by an ethic of respect for democratic values.

- Fourthly, that we should individually strive to improve our style in communicating research findings, and embrace the idea of reporting at both an academic level and a public level.

- And, fifthly, that we should welcome the notion of a General Teaching Council in England and Wales and seek to contribute actively to its work.

Creating education through research is not just the title of a lecture or the theme of a conference; it is an imperative for the future of a democratic society.

REFERENCES

BALL, S. (1990) *Politics and Policy Making in Education* (London, Routledge).

CAMPBELL, R. (1981) Hearing children read: an example from an infant school, *Reading.* 15, pp.26-32.

ILLICH, 1. (1973) *Tools for Conviality* (London, Calder & Boyars).

JEFEREYS, M. V. C. (1950) *Glaucon: an enquiry into the aims of education* (London, Pitman).

KOTTKAMP, R. B. (1990) Means for facilitating reflection, *Education and Urban Society,* 22(2), *pp.* 182-203.

MAJOR, J. (1991) Speech to Centre for Policy Studies, reported in *The Times Educational Supplement,* 12 July.

PETERS. R. S. (1966) *Ethics and Education* (London, George Allen & Unwin).

POPPER, K. (1945) *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London, Routledge).

SCHON, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner* (London, Basic Books).

SCHUMACHER, E. F. (1973) *Small is Beautiful* (London, Blond & Briggs).

SIMON. B. (1985) *Does Education Matter?* (London, Lawrence & Wishart).

TOMLINSON. J. (1991) Speech to a forum for a General Teaching Council for England and Wales, 1 July.

YOUNG, M. (1958) *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (London, Thames & Hudson).