*The Profession of Educational Research**

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ABSTRACT *This paper argues that educational research and policy-making is in crisis: centrally funded research is subject to increasing intervention and restrictions on reporting; research findings are misreported in the press; and the policy-making process has become truncated ignoring discussion, debate and research evidence. Furthermore the direction in which current reforms are taking education is contrary to the style of curriculum, learning and assessment that is needed to produce resourceful, active learners for the twenty-first century. The author calls on researchers to continue to work with teachers in support of a worthwhile educational enterprise, urges researchers to continue to strive to publish their findings and to work together within BERA to move forward in the hostile climate.*

Introduction

I have the privilege of addressing you this year in what is I think the lowest point in recent times for both education and educational research. In 1988 Patricia Broadfoot said that there can have been few less auspicious years in which to deliver the Presidential Address, coming as it did after the 1987 election which offered a further 5 year term of hostile policy climate for research in general, and education in particular. My thesis this afternoon is that we have had 5 years at least as difficult and hostile as we had imagined in 1988, perhaps worse, and that we cannot predict what the next 5 years will offer. We may make a shrewd guess, but as the last 5 years has shown us, prediction is an increasingly unsafe practice.

Whilst a certainty that times might be hard was in the air in 1988, what we did not anticipate was that policy-making in education, based on research evidence, would be cut off at the knees. Research and evaluation is still being funded by central agencies but the work is subject to delay in reporting, or not being reported at all, misreporting in the popular press and a general discourse of derision (Ball, 1990) which has, effectively I fear, asserted the primacy of common-sense knowledge over specialist, expert knowledge, and assigned it (forever?) to the sidelines.

It may be of course that common-sense knowledge will, through its impact on education 1 policy-making, result in a 'better' education system in the sense that it is more efficient. But 1 believe that the system which is emerging will not be more fair, that it will not offer equity along with excellence, nor will it produce the kind of active, resourceful skills-based learner which we in the United Kingdom need for the next century. Be that as it may, and 1 will come back to both these points later, the situation is one of crisis for those of us who work in educational research, those who 'profess' educational research, and leads me to pose two questions:

1. Should we continue to spend time and money on research (and for the moment I am talking about funded research) which is ignored or derided?
2. How else might we labour to support, even to continue, a worthwhile educational enterprise?

For I doubt that there are many in this hall this afternoon who believe that education is only about efficiency, about the learning of formal taught knowledge, about the inculcating into children of yesterday's culture, but have a wider vision, as G. K. Chesterton (1924) did, of education as "the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another". What sort of a soul is our generation passing on to the next? What is the vision and where is equity?

Let me lighten the tone for a moment. Philip Jackson, author of *Life in Classrooms* and one of the founders of the qualitative educational research tradition opened his paper at the 1992 American Educational Research Association conference with this:

> I walk through the long schoolroom questioning; ... the children's eyes/In momentary wonder stare upon/ A sixty-year-old smiling public man." Thus begins and ends the first stanza of 'Among School Children' by William Butler Yeats. However, when it comes to being stared at by rows of puzzled youngsters, Yeats has nothing on me. I have walked through schoolrooms questioning more times than I can count. He only did so when he was a member of the Irish Senate and was called upon to pay a political visit to some schools in the provinces. He did all right though with his educational courtesy calls, even if he wasn't followed around by camera crews in those days. He wrote a poem about one of them, 56 lines of verse that have since become so famous that now schoolchildren old enough to be assigned such things are required to study them. I wish I could say the same about the fruits of my labour. In fact, forget the students. I would be quite content if only teachers were required to read a few of the things I have hammered out about my trespasses upon their domain. I would be even happier, of course, if they chose to read them on their own.
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> Thoughts like these must be common to the crowing band of educational researchers who in recent years have elected to undertake qualitative investigations of one kind or another and, as a consequence, have wound up spending a significant amount of time observing in classrooms and school corridors. Or maybe not. Maybe the bulk of them don't think that way at all. Maybe they are so cocksure about what they are doing that they never question its ultimate benefit and never yearn for a wider audience than the one they are confident will one day be theirs. If so, they're lucky. Quite frankly, though, I suspect the majority are more like me. In any case, it is for those who feel as I do that I would like to explore the question of who we are writing for and why. (Jackson, 1992)

What Jackson goes on to say is that he is writing for lovers of truth about teaching (some of whom may be teachers); that such research is valued because it is crucial to the long-term improvement of *educational* practice though it may never tell teachers or administrators exactly what to do. In other words, he is arguing for a continued place for basic as opposed to strategic research, the former being aimed at seeking answers to questions that are of interest to investigators who want to understand an educational phenomenon in its own right without necessarily connecting their investigation to the goal of improved practice. Such research when well done, he maintains, contributes to a deepened understanding of what teaching and schooling are all about. My first question relates essentially to whether this point of view (long held, particularly in science) is a luxury or whether it is one we can sustain in the post Education Reform Act (ERA), post Thatcher, postmodern age.

First, I will give some examples to support my claim that educational research and policy-making is in crisis, then attempt an analysis of how we got where we are. I shall explain why I think current reforms are not likely to produce the sort of learner we need for the twenty-first century, before turning to what I think we need to do in the future.

Examples of the Crisis in Educational Research and Policy-making

Last summer 7 year-olds sat the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATS) as part of national assessment for the first time. The reporting and publicity over those results gave rise to two of the most shameful and unsavoury events in recent years. First, Kenneth Clarke, the then Secretary of State for Education, announced in an article published in a Sunday tabloid, 4 days before the results were officially available, that the figures would show that nearly a third of 7 year-olds were unable to recognise three letters of the alphabet. *(Mail on Sunday,* 14 December 1991). This information was then repeated on the BBC's *The World This Weekend* radio programme and in many other media slots. In fact, the figures showed that less than 2.5% of the 7 year-olds tested were at this level of competence. Mr Clarke's 28% of 7-year olds were actually those who had not reached Level Two in reading-whereas his comments implied that they had not reached Level One. Whether witting or unwitting this error set up in the public's mind that something is terribly amiss in, not only the teaching of reading, but primary education in general. As we know, no amount of retraction or apology could make the same impact as the initial claims-indeed there was none. The National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) eventually received a written apology from Marmaduke Hussey, BBC Chairman, who said that it was too late to offer a correction *(Times Educational Supplement,* 24 April, 1992 'BBC apologises for reading story error') and suggested they write a letter to *Feedback* - the Radio 4 programme which deals with complaints ...

Next, the results for 7 year-olds were put into Local Education Authority (LEA) league tables (DES, 1991) and published, despite schools and LEAs having been informed that, since it was technically a trial run, no such thing would happen *and* despite evidence from an independent evaluation commissioned at Leeds University by the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) that the national assessment data was undependable. The final draft of the Leeds report was received at SEAC on 9 December, 2 weeks before the LEA league tables were published. That the report had not yet been approved by SEAC and that it had not been passed on to the Minister is not really in doubt, but one would expect, in a system which was concerned with efficiency and interested in facts and accuracy, for such information-even in draft status-to be acted on to halt the league tables. Far from it, and the LEAs at the bottom of the league table were pilloried while Clarke went on to blame poor teaching and Labour-led councils' high spending and inefficiency *(The Guardian,* 7 April 1992 'Heat on Thatcher aide tests furore'). In fact the Leeds draft report (finally published in the last week of July 1992) stating that the results were unreliable had added "In a context where the results of assessment may be made public, schools with large numbers of ethnic minority children, children from deprived social backgrounds or even younger rather than older children, would not appear in a particularly good light. The reasons for this would under these circumstances have little to do with the quality and appropriateness of the education being offered". Gross incompetence on behalf of Mr Clarke's professional advisers, or political handling of unpalatable evidence? As with the misinformation on the reading SATS, the delay over publication meant that the information about unreliability came

too late for the LEAs at the bottom of the league tables and had a profound effect on public opinion.

As an example of the discourse of derision we have Education Ministers Eggar and Fallon attacking the work of Harvey Goldstein and Desmond Nuttall. Eggar said "we must not cover up underachievement with fiddled figures" *(Times Educational Supplement,* 22 November 1991, '"Fiddled" figures scorned'). Kenneth Clarke referred to them as "Nutstein and Goldall", 'Pretending' he had never heard of them or their work; Fallon said "we will not be dressing up the facts, obscuring the real level of performance by altering outcomes to take account of spurious measures of disadvantage or deprivation". It took the headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies College to retort that this was an "arrogant and ignorant" response *(Evening Standard,* 6 November 1991, 'Fallon snubs professors' exam plea'). The independent sector of course knows only too well that there is a very high correlation between the level of academic selectivity of a school and its academic success. As the head of probably the most academically selective boys' public school, Westminster, commented on a league table of independent schools, "I wonder if you realise what a disservice you do to so many schools by concocting a league table of this kind?" *(Daily Telegraph,* 5 September 1991, 'More schools aspire to the top table').

Probably the most ill-informed comment on an educational issue, with a direct throwback to the reported 7 year-old SAT results, came from Member of Parliament Mr Alan Amos who is concerned about the amount of play activity in nursery schools. "Mr Amos believes there is too much project work in nursery schools and that there should be more teaching of the class as a whole". He said the poor results of 7 year-olds in reading and mathematics demonstrated the need to monitor what went on in the early years *(Times Educational Supplement,* 13 December 1991, 'Checks on nursery schools'). At this point I'd like to remind you that Mr Fallon said he liked the Report on Primary Education by Alexander *et al.* (1992) because it was refreshingly free of ideology! *(Times Educational Supplement,* 8 November 1991, 'Streaming "may begin at 9"').

For developments in policy that are refreshingly free of educational support one must cite the reduction in course work in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Despite early problems, over organisation and timing, it is clear to many parents, teachers and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI, 1988), that course work encourages pupils to keep working through the year, and requires coverage of a wider part of the syllabus rather than 'topic-spotting' for an examination. It enables pupils to be assessed - on a wider range of tasks than traditional examinations, and allows a broader range of candidates the opportunity to show what they can do, unlike the traditional hurdle examination. What's more, the traditional pencil and paper examination cannot test the whole of the National Curriculum.

Not to labour the point, A and AS levels and modular courses are to follow the same pattern, with reduced coursework and a terminal examination (yes, even for modular courses) which will effectively reduce the advantages of modular study *(Times Educational Supplement,* 20 December 1991, p. 9) and limit the possibility of A and AS levels being brought closer to vocational courses. This move even flies in the face of the employers, given the recommendations of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in their report 'Towards a Skills Revolution' for more varied teaching and assessing methods in all post-16 courses. *(Times Educational Supplement, 10* January 1992, 'A-level limits will hamper reform').

All in all, this looks like backward progress flying in the face of 'expert' opinion, that now derided commodity. What is behind it is the belief from the political Right, particularly the Centre for Policy Studies, that the only appropriate form for high-status examinations is the one we have had in the past *(Times Educational Supplement, 10* January 1992, 'Think tank cuts back in coursework') - in that Golden Age we all remember when education served us so well: the terminal unseen examination. The other problem seems to be that more pupils are gaining GCSEs than was the case in the old days of O-Level and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). (This of course was one of the intentions of GCSE.) This has been interpreted as meaning that standards must be falling and Mr Clarke's fear ". . . seems to be that people *who don't deserve* it are getting qualifications, staying on at school . . . *" (Times Educational Supplement, 29* November 1991, Comment; 10 January 1992, 'A successful disaster').

If any further example were needed that we have lost our way it is the apparent disregard for the group of children who are difficult to educate, or who come to school with few advantages (and who might expect schooling to support them). In the world of Local Management of Schools (LMS), selection, grant maintained schools and league tables such children, particularly those with special needs, are fairly unmarketable commodities. As the Director of the National Children's Bureau put it, current policies "appeal to the constituency of achieving parents, essentially a group quite capable of looking after themselves" *(Times Educational Supplement,* 17 January 1992, 'Needy child must not be abandoned'). Those of us who warned about the social implications of the ERA (Gipps, 1990) with its combination of LMS, published national assessment results, and emphasis on competition (which would effectively overwhelm the advantages of a common entitlement curriculum) were castigated as overly negative and harbingers of doom. It gives little pleasure to see item by item that we are being proved right from the rise in the number of exclusions to the increase in children going to *separate* special educational needs provision to the documenting of the empty rhetoric of parental choice for all. A fair competition after all is one in which the best person wins (not one in which everyone has the chance to gain something) and free choice for some is the loss of choice for others. What sort of soul is our generation passing on to the next?

As Ball (1992) has documented, the concept of market choice allows the articulate middle and educated classes to exert their privilege (whilst not appearing to do so). Both the market and the chooser operate in terms of self-interest and the result is exclusion and differentiation, rather than freedom and choice. Choice is not to be confused with selection. How the system copes with unchosen schools and unselected children is likely to be a major dilemma. Chubb & Moe, Americans who were invited to analyse the British system write this dilemma off in two paragraphs, which completely underestimates the task:

> The standard criticisms of choice are aimed at the free market. They argue that people are not well enough informed to make good choices, that people lack transportation to the schools they prefer, that schools will discriminate in admissions, that private schools will prosper at the expense of state schools, and so on. And because these problems primarily affect the poor and minorities, they say, a choice system would push these people into second-class schools, while the economically advantaged would behave like bandits.
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> Choice is not a free market system. Its 'educational markets' operate within an institutional framework, and the Government's job is to design the framework so that

> these concerns are dealt with. *(Sunday Times Magazine, 9* February 1992, 'The classroom revolution').

We have of course heard very little of this 'frame-work'. It's all a far cry from Dewey: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must be the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy ... Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself' (Dewey, 1915, p. 7).

How Did We Get Where We Are?

I shall now read you a letter from Sir Douglas Black (the Chief Medical Officer) *(The Guardian,* 9 March 1992) about the health care system, but it could equally be about education:

> I have just got back from a conference in New York on health care associated with social deprivation. We may have our problems in this country, but the Americans, as is customary, have far bigger ones. And all this, in spite of the most expensive health care in the world. Two years ago in *The Guardian* I asked, why should we be seeking to imitate the American system? The question remains unanswered.
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> It is my belief that until they adopt, and we restore, a health care system grounded in equity, and not one which allows market forces to dictate a shallow entrepreneurism, health problems will not be tackled in the most economic and efficient way. Good health care cannot be achieved for the rich or the poor, unless there is good health care for all.

I read you this because we need to remember that the shift in policy-making, away from one based on discussion and evidence, is not only happening in education. As Jonathan Rosenhead, Professor of Operational Research at the London School of Economics, points out *(The Guardian,* 5 May 1992, 'Platform: politics of the gut reaction') the demise of the Central Policy Review Staff-the original Think Tank-set up by Heath, and its eventual replacement by the Policy Unit, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute marked a shift from policy choice based on evidence and argument to one based on principles and gut reaction. Rosenhead describes what he calls the impoverished policy process in which the Think Tanks promote policy through strong value assertions and then proceed directly to detailed prescriptions. Argumentation is intuitive: there is appeal at most to anecdotal evidence but not to research. As examples of the result of this abbreviated policy process with slipshod or absent analysis he cites: the National 'Health Service reforms, the poll tax, school opting out and the student loans 'fiasco'. Rosenhead places at the root of this movement an ideology with a semi-mystical belief in the beneficial properties of market forces and a disbelief in the power of reason; this has resulted, he concludes, in a "wilful failure to concede a significant role to reason in the practice of collective decision-making".

Anthony Sampson in a revisiting of the 'Anatomy of Britain in 1992' *(Independent on Sunday,* 29 March 1992) just before the election, charts the growing centralisation of power and the loss of voice for those out of power:

> Since the seventies, the national cast of public characters has narrowed strikingly. The earlier drama included a range of major speaking parts, including trades unionists, local councillors, vice-chancellors, scientists, regional leaders and maverick politicians. Now the story line and supporting characters have been pared down to the central plot, revolving around money, the Treasury and - above all - Downing Street. (p. 4)

John Major inherited a much more centralised system than a decade earlier, dominated by personality and financial controls; the character of government has also become more uniform in its exclusion of questioning and dissent. Sampson concludes that the last 13 years have seen the British power structure concentrated at the top, while representation of people further down has become weaker through the undermining of local government, regional powers and trade unions. This erosion of democracy is accompanied by a growing underclass of families disconnected from the system and out of reach of normal ladders.

I would argue that in the suppression of unwelcome research reports, the rubbishing of academics' arguments, and the marginalising of unproductive pupils and schools we see a further erosion of democracy, and furthermore will see an increase of the underclass by virtue of the type of education system we are developing. Do not assume by this that I wish incompetent schools to be left as they are-far from it, but a collegial system which supports, *manages* and improves would be far preferable to market forces-however they might operate here.

The status of educational research is, perhaps inevitably, a mirror of the status of education and teaching-at all levels-itself. As Smithers & Robinson (1991) reported at the end of last year "Poor discipline., heavy work-loads and lack of status are pushing teachers out of state schools and into the independent sector or out of education altogether . . . " *(Times Educational Supplement,* 27 December 1991, 'Lack of status fuels the exodus'). Of those leaving the profession the highest proportion (one-fifth) did so through early retirement or ill-health; typically ex-teachers became insurance-sellers, tour operators, taxi drivers or opened guest houses-almost half of those leaving the profession became self-employed; more than half of those who decided to change jobs altogether said it was the feeling of being undervalued that prompted the decision. To those outside schools the teacher supply 'problem' seems to have gone away because recruitment to initial teacher training is buoyant. This is, however, seen within education to be due to the recession, rather than any sudden improvement in the status of teaching. As Professor Smithers put it "Government has solved the teacher supply crisis by closing down the economy" *(Times Educational Supplement,* 27 December 1991, Quotes of the year).

A. H. Halsey in his (third) survey of academic staff in universities and polytechnics has documented the *Decline of Donnish Dominion* (1992). During the last 30 years higher education has expanded on an enormous scale. One might have thought that with the growing demand for its services the status of the academic profession would have risen; instead public esteem for academics is lower than ever. Our prestige has plummeted in the eyes of the 'politician and the populace': deteriorating conditions of intellectual work, declining autonomy of institutions, fallen salaries, decreased chances of promotion, loss of tenure; these are the tangible aspects of the loss of status and esteem. Few of Halsey's respondents now recommend to their students a life in higher education. Halsey ascribes this decline to the proletarianisation of intellectual labour; to "dogmatic preferences for market solutions ... distorted by an urgent search for political survival and advantage"; and to

increasing disagreement about what universities are for; to transmit knowledge or enhance it, useful knowledge or knowledge for its own sake, and is the primary aim to supply the economy with a technologically efficient workforce? Halsey's view is that one reason why the response from academics to this hostile climate has been so mild is because of their tolerance of hostile ideology and the patience to pursue reasoned argument. Perhaps it is time academics gave up these traits.

The Direction of Educational Reform

One result of the direction in which education and educational reform is moving is that we are putting ourselves firmly into a pedagogical and curriculum model (for the vast majority of pupils and schools but of course not for the high status ones) which will not produce the sort of individual which this country needs for the next century.

The movement that we are seeing this century is social, political, cultural and economic and education is charged with responding to this global change. However, it is the economic changes which drive the rhetoric: technological developments demand better educated, more thoughtful and flexible workers across the labour market, to strengthen the country's technological base and to foster a spirit of enterprise and initiative. The apparent mismatch between the output of the schools and the needs of the labour market, as indicated by the number of unqualified school leavers and by the number of young unemployed, suggested that education had departed from the 'real world' of work and the result has been to seek to re-couple education with the economy (Neave, 1988). This has resulted in a redefinition of the cultural base on which education rests, away from the humanistic tradition towards an industrial culture. Together with this comes a celebration of cultural uniformity, a return to subject-bound traditional curriculum and the transmission model of teaching within formal classrooms.

Traditional curricular and pedagogical models are at odds with what research in cognition is telling us: that learning is a process of knowledge construction, not of recording or absorption; that learning is knowledge-dependent, we use current knowledge to construct new knowledge; and that learning is highly tuned to the situation in which it takes place:

> Cognitive theories tell us that learning occurs not by recording information but by interpreting it. Effective learning depends on the intentions, self-monitoring, elaborations, and representational constructions of the individual learner. The traditional view of instruction as direct transfer of knowledge does not fit this constructivist perspective. We need instead instructional theories that place the learner's constructive mental activity at the heart of any instructional exchange, that treat instruction as an intervention in an' ongoing knowledge construction process. This does not mean, however, that students can be left to discover everything for themselves. (Resnick, 1989)

In addition, it seems that the search for generalisable or transferable knowledge in producing the flexible learner could be better served by teaching strategies for successful learning. Successful learners tend to elaborate and develop self-explanations to extend the information they are dealing with; they also tend to monitor their own understanding as they work. These metacognitive strategies together with the habit of meaning-imposition tend to make

individuals successful learners in range of domains. The learner's intentional efforts to find links among elements of knowledge, to develop explanations and justifications, and to raise questions serve to produce the flexible learner better than a focus on transfer in basic processes or a search for packages of knowledge that have wide applicability.

Similarly, the more traditional model of classroom management in which the teacher manages the teaching (and learning) experience, in which students are to be obedient, compliant learners is in tension with our educational requirements for the next century: the self-motivated, active learner. Classroom management needs to do more than elicit predictable obedience: it should be a vehicle for the enhancement of self-understanding, self-evaluation and the internalisation of self-control and direction (McCaslin & Good, 1992). This requires allowing pupils to have growing responsibility for and self-regulation in their learning and to become adaptive learner rather than predictable learners.

Current directions in central policy-making in education are at odds with the directions which research on learning and cognition would tell us to take. The transmission model of teaching, in a traditional formal classroom, with strong subject and task boundaries and traditional narrow assessment is the opposite of what we need to produce learners who can think critically, synthesise and transform, experiment and create. We need a flexible curriculum, active co-operative forms of learning, opportunities for pupils to talk through the knowledge which they are incorporating, open forms of assessment e.g. self-evaluation and reflection on their learning, in short a thinking curriculum aimed at higher order performance and cognitive skills.

Instead we are heading, inexplicably, back to the grammar school curriculum (with the addition of computing and technology) in a system in which teachers, deprived of autonomy, will have little scope for offering learners autonomy in a high-stakes testing driven system. Teaching for understanding is, after all, not the same as teaching for the test.

The Post-modern Era

How can we understand the process of reform that is taking place in education? What must we understand about our era? Change may be seen as part of the process of social regulation, and schooling as tying culture, economy and the modern State to the cognitive and motivating patterns of the individual (Popkewitz, 1991).

In the Classical Age, before the seventeenth century, there was perceived to be a direct relationship between the word and the thing it represented; knowledge was predictable and stable, symbols and representations simply mirrored a natural order, which was God given and not to be questioned. The shift to the Enlightenment began in the seventeenth century, moving from a Classical view in which the word was representative of the object to a view in which analysis of language, social practice and history was possible. "The attempt to treat facts as existing within contextual boundaries and then to establish the condition of the possibility of all facts was an entirely new notion of the eighteenth century" (Popkewitz, 1991, p. 34). The hope of the Modern age was that, through tying progress to reason, and bringing systematic human intervention to social institutions, more democratic and equitable social arrangements would be created. The natural order was created by man and not only could, but should, be questioned.

The world in which we now find ourselves, characterised as post-modern, suggests that our old ways of understanding and questioning the world need adjusting if we are to influence it. Traditional epistemology's supposed neutrality is challenged, the categories of 'truth' and 'knowledge' are seen to be not only hugely complex and ambiguous but politically saturated (Griffiths, 1992). The cultural shift incorporating new types of consumption, the penetration of advertising, television and the media throughout society, the information revolution, means that activities like scientific theorising and philosophy are not in a privileged position able to comment on the times from a secure vantage point (Kemmis, 1992). Our period is noteworthy for disturbing the formerly secure foundations of knowledge and understanding; foundational views of knowledge are increasingly under attack. This confronts the search for absolutes and for certainty in our ways of knowing (Lather, 1992); in this paradigm there is no grand narrative, no great conceptual framework. This crisis of confidence in Western conceptual systems is borne out of a realisation of the limits of Enlightenment rationality; this together with the paradigm shift in the philosophy of science, has produced a body of criticism of the notion of a method that is a "transhistorical, culture-free, disinterested, replicable, testable, empirical substantiation of theory" (Lather, 1992, p. 3). Thus there are a number of ways of doing research and generating understanding: there is no 'one best way' in empirical work in the human sciences. As the concepts of a value-free approach, and disinterested knowledge implode, so we see "more interactive, contextualised humanly compelling research methods gain increasing legitimacy" (Lather, 1992, p. 5). "Like all other sciences, educational research is increasingly construed as a value-constituted and value-constituting enterprise, no more outside the power/knowledge nexus than any other creation." (Lather, 1992, p. 5).

What does this situation mean for the research community and for any hope we might espouse for affecting policy? If educational research in the post-modern world is to be characterised by fragmentation and a firm belief that all is uncertain we shall find ourselves, I fear, even less able to talk to policy-makers. Their world is characterised by certainty, and by an almost Classical belief in the natural order. If we allow ourselves to be fragmented we run the risk of becoming even further marginalised.

One problem is that we face a residual search for certainty as part of our psychological make-up and the focus of policy-makers most clearly is for certain answers, and support for particular routes. Those on the extreme political right who advise government on education are certain: they are profoundly certain in their view of what constitutes a good school system, proper teaching, the right curriculum. The pastiche of education that we are being offered from the 'old days' offers certainty in the face of uncertainty, that is uncertainty about the way the world is going, about global and individual economies, about employment and life chances. We are, therefore, at a particularly difficult juncture for education if policy-makers and educationists are seen to be moving towards different ends of the certainty/uncertainty axis.

In this particular set of circumstances, with a poor record of our work being used by policy-makers anyway, what should we do? Can we permit ourselves to present our work like this? Not all of us espouse a fully-fledged version of post-modernity (whatever that might look like) but as a discipline we are moving inexorably away from positivism and its certainties.

Yvonna Lincoln grappling in the USA with a very similar situation in which the research evidence on the problems of a national assessment movement is being swept aside, "the data

of the positivist research community is ignored, while the analyses of the criticalist community are treated as though it did not exist" (Lincoln, 1992) argues that as social scientists we have always been poor at communicating with policy-makers, that we have focused on the *effects* of policies rather than on the processes of policy development and that we must correct these trends and learn how to manage an impact on the policy process as well as learning how to address research consumers, including policy analysts.

In the post-Rothshild era of research and policy-making the gap between the values and expectations of the research community and the policy-makers is widening. Government supported research is expected to articulate with the Government's policy agenda: "it is more of a politically-steered, categorically-funded, problem-solving activity" (Hamilton, 1992). This is bringing into sharp focus issues such as: what counts as research, who owns the information produced, the 'privileged' status of the research community. As David Hamilton puts it "what is the role of research in the forward planning of market-led economies?"

So, how we might go forward?

A Professional Agenda

What is our agenda as a profession? Should we still do research? How else can we support a worthwhile educational enterprise?

Dewey again: "Men (sic) live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common ... what they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge - a common understanding . . . " (Dewey, 1916, p. 5).

I believe that, first, we need to re-state what we as educationists have in common, and that is contingent on our view of what constitutes good education: an education which permits *every* individual to achieve the best they are capable of (not 'educate the best, forget the rest'). Furthermore we need to keep re-stating the means by which we believe this can best be achieved. We and the schools and teachers with whom we work are a polity, a community with shared purpose. We must through our professional association and collegial support hang together: we need the 'Invisible College' as a grand network and support to counteract the micropolitics of our everyday lives within our institutions.

I have focused mainly on funded research in this address, partly because that is the form of research in which I am most closely involved, and partly because it is this form of research on which policy is/should be based. Many BERA members are engaged in other forms of research including teacher research which is recognised throughout the world. My lack of emphasis on this research is not to undervalue collegial research with teachers and others working in schools, but simply reflects the fact that we write best about what we know best. The development of networks for and with teachers building professional communities which work together to improve practice, are a major contribution to the professional development of both sides of the partnership and a key to supporting a worthwhile educational enterprise.

In answer to my first question, of course we should still do funded research, but undertaking centrally-funded research at any cost (in terms of sponsor control over design and publication) devalues the profession of educational research. As individuals in beleaguered institutions and with colleagues' livelihoods at stake we may have little choice but to get

involved in this type of work. But, as members of a professional association we must continue to battle against restrictive contracts and in particular limitations on publication. The restrictions on publication, which amount to a denial of intellectual property rights, in many centrally funded research contracts carried out by academics employed by universities (Pettigrew & Norris, 1992) shocks our colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic and elsewhere. We need to draw our institutions into offering proper collegial support for researchers who are having difficulties with intellectual property rights or publication problems with sponsors and this is an important element of our new ethical guidelines: approaches to institutions will be part of our dissemination and development process.

Policy-makers may espouse the ideas of those who express deep pessimism about the rational solubility of social and educational problems, so that they critique hyper-rationalism - "the irrational belief in the omnipotence of reason". But we do not: reason may not be omnipotent, but it must have a place. We do, however, need to be willing to re-examine some of our assumptions and beliefs, in the same way that we wish the extreme right to be shifted from their certainty. Furthermore, we need to analyse policy and put into the public domain not only critiques, but also to describe 'dystopias' the undesirable futures that are implicit in current policies and trends (Campbell, 1981). At this stage, that may be more effective than describing utopias or alternative desirable futures. We spend much energy characterising the period that we are in or past (post-modern, post-structural, post-Fordist, post-positivist, post-Thatcher, post everything), but we often omit to consider the period that lies ahead. We know what we are post, but what are we pre? If education is becoming defined as a tool of industrial strategy what kind of society will result? What kind of utopia or dystopia are we then building? One in which I as an individual shall do my "duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me?" (Book of Common Prayer, Catechism) a profoundly non-Enlightenment project.

"Liberty without fraternity, of individualism unlimited by an equal sense of responsibility to the collectivity, is at best a poor and tattered thing" (Neave, 1988). We need to re-introduce the concept of equity into the debate: if we do not, then who will speak for the constituency of the non-achieving parent, who will speak for the full and equal rights, the right not to be marginalised, of pupils who have learning or behaviour difficulties? "Are we aiming for a minimalist morality in which you do good (or avoid doing harm) to others only if it is in your own interests?" (Tomlinson, 1992). Let us hope not.

If we do not describe the possible dystopias we shall be left only with the politicians' utopias. If we do not insist on bringing research findings (which may be politically inconvenient) into the public arena, we contribute to the erosion of democracy. The 'discourse of derision' which results must be seen as an inconvenient, even unpleasant, occupational hazard, but its power will be far greater if we allow it to silence us.

Perhaps we can, like Erikson, another of the founding fathers of qualitative research, looking back to the golden age when qualitative researchers experienced academic marginality, believe that our position on the periphery will lead to fresh insights in substance and in method; that indeed at some point we will look back with nostalgia to this era of marginality when we become, once again, legitimate. "Maybe we can stay marginal as the cutting edge moves on, post-everything" (Erickson, 1992). This is making a virtue out of necessity but if being marginal to policy-making and the popular press is a phase that we must continue to endure for at least another 5 years then we must use this period, not to stagnate or give up,

but to think, to rethink, to develop, to understand the policy process, to support each other, and the schools and teachers with whom we work. The importance of academic critique and intellectual activity, of collegial work within the polity, is even greater in an era such as this.

The networks and activities organised by BERA are crucial. We cannot stand alone as individuals in a hostile climate, we must stand together. Our profession and our polity are the two greatest strengths we have, and could have, against the hostile educational and research climate in which we are trying to hold on to a vision of what we do that is of worth. And we must not give up.

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