How do we develop inclusional epistemologies for a new scholarship of democratic educational enquiry?

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Abstract

In this paper we explain how and why, in our roles as a Dean and a visiting professor, we encourage practitioner-researchers in our faculties and elsewhere to generate and make public their descriptions and explanations of practice as their living educational theories, by addressing the question, 'How do I/we improve my/our work?' (Whitehead 1989), as we also do, and as we are doing here. Grounded in inclusional logics and values, these accounts constitute a reconceptualisation of theory from normative propositional forms to new living forms. A key feature of these living theories is the articulation of the relationally dynamic standards of judgement we use to test the validity of our research claims. Working collaboratively with others, as we research our practices in higher education settings, however, can be problematic, since we are developing new participative discourses within institutional cultures whose aims often include the perpetuation of divisive and exclusionary politically-constituted discourses, using technocratic epistemologies, to control what counts as knowledge and who should be seen as a knower. We experience such tensions keenly, especially in South African higher education contexts, where a commitment to democratic educational enquiry often means wrestling with the ontological insecurities of transforming existing logics of domination into new inclusive epistemologies within a post-apartheid democratic university culture. This is, however, the task we have set ourselves. In this paper, we explain how, by subjecting our accounts to public critique as we research how to encourage the development of new institutional epistemologies, we are aiming to contribute to the education of the social formation of the higher education community. We are doing this by showing how it is possible to develop high quality research programmes that are grounded in inclusional and transformational logics and that focus on demonstrating their methodological rigour through an analysis of the transformation

of ontological values into the epistemological standards of judgement against which the validity of research claims can be tested. We explain how the development of such new inclusional institutional epistemologies can act as the grounds for a form of social solidarity that can contribute to forms of sustainable social evolution and, in a South African context, can contribute to South Africa's renaissance, and how our explanations for these processes can contribute to the education of wider social formations.

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing the new post-apartheid South Africa can be understood as how to ensure that the key services and institutions of the country reflect the egalitarian impulses of the new democracy (Council on Higher Education 2004). This is especially the case for education, given that education is the main institution for communicating the normative practices of the culture (Bourdieu 1988), and ensuring the healthy development of the social formations within the culture. Given further that it is the task of higher education to set precedents for the epistemological base of what counts as normative practices within the culture, it is essential that the domain of higher education itself should reflect the commitments of the new democratic social order (Jenkins *et al*. 2003). If democracy implies that all citizens should come together, on an equal footing, to negotiate their own life plans, and find ways of living in the direction of their humanitarian and democratic values, a clear implication is that higher education itself needs to create new practices and new infrastructures to support the independent thinking of the members of its communities and ensure the basic conditions through which such independent thinking and communicative action can be safeguarded.

This is however a sticking point, which provides the context and the impulse for our research. As free and free-thinking professionals in higher education contexts, we wish to exercise our options for negotiating our practices, including our commitments to the development of the new epistemologies of the New Scholarship (Boyer 1990), grounded as they are in democratic and humanitarian educational values. However, we often find ourselves in the institutional epistemological contexts of traditional forms of scholarship,

in which those democratic educational values are frequently contradicted in practice. This happens often because of the entrenched assumptions of traditional institutional epistemologies that are grounded in established forms of propositional theory and a logic of domination (Marcuse 1964), and that consequently deny both the democratic impulses of the socio-political practices of the new South Africa and the epistemological and methodological impulses of the New Scholarship. We therefore come to experience ourselves as living contradictions (Whitehead 1989) when our democratic epistemological values of enquiry learning are denied in our practices by the hegemony of the dominant institutional values that focus on the control and maintenance of the existing epistemological order. We therefore exercise our minds as to how to overcome the tension, so that we do realise our values in our practices, and exercise our educational leadership in a manner that ensures the full social and epistemological democratic participation of all members of the institutional community.

At the same time, we appreciate that we cannot impose such new epistemologies without explaining how or why we do so, that is, without justifying our own practices and commitments to those new forms. Such an imposition would amount to oppression, as explained by Berlin (2002), who critiqued the contradictory practice of the imposition of freedom as a denial of the very freedom it claimed to value. In this paper therefore we offer this justification, and in so doing, show how we try to hold ourselves accountable for our educational leadership practices to ourselves, our colleagues, and to the educational research community.

First we set out the contexts for our research. We then go on to explain why we believe our research demonstrates internal validity and our own moral accountability.

Contexts for our research

We work together at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Ana Naidoo is Dean of Education, with the responsibility for exercising her academic leadership in the development of a strong and coherent research-active Faculty. Jean McNiff is a

visiting professor from St Mary's University College in the UK and a research associate at NMMU. Her professional commitments include the encouragement of faculty in her own College, at NMMU, and internationally, to develop their capacity in new scholarship forms of educational enquiry for social transformation. For the last two years we have been working together to strengthen research capacity at NMMU, in relation to developing a distinctive research approach whereby members of faculty investigate their practices by asking questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?', and producing research accounts, comprising their descriptions and explanations of practice, as their living educational theories (Whitehead 1989). Both of us have deep commitments to developing new institutional epistemologies for a new scholarship of educational enquiry (Whitehead 1999). The idea of developing new institutional epistemologies for new scholarships of educational enquiry is an important idea that bears some further explanation.

In 1990, Ernest Boyer, then President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, proposed that the higher education professoriate needed to develop new priorities for their scholarship. Traditional forms of scholarship, he said, such as those conducted in the social sciences, had proven to be inadequate for the development of new educational practices that would have deep relevance for new forms of social practice. Boyer called for a new scholarship, through which professionals could study their own practice. In 1995, Donald Schön developed this theme, calling for new epistemologies for the new scholarship. Traditional epistemologies, he said, were rooted in propositional forms of research and theory. In propositional forms of research, a researcher adopted a spectator attitude towards an object of enquiry in order to offer descriptions and explanations about it. The descriptions and explanations that the spectator researcher offered for the practice under observation came to constitute a theory about that practice. The form of theory was abstract and conceptual. This had long been accepted as the normative practice in educational research (Lagemann 2000). Since the adoption by the community of educational researchers of the methods of the social sciences, educational researchers had observed their fields of study and produced their theories in the form of statements and propositions. This had considerable implications for practitioners in

educational workplaces, whose learning educational theory was intended to serve. Propositional theories could be communicated to practitioners, who could apply the theories to their practices. This, said Boyer and Schön, was the traditional mode of enquiry in higher education settings, whose logical assumptions could inform the kind of pedagogical relationships appropriate for communicating and implementing propositional theories. Working from the spectator-researcher metaphor of traditional forms of enquiry, the same pattern of epistemological relationships between knower and what was known could easily transfer to pedagogical settings, where the teacher knew the theory and passed it on to their students. Therefore pedagogical relationships in education became power-constituted hierarchical relationships in which the teacher's knowledge was superior to the student's, and, by implication, the teacher was positioned as superior to the student. The metaphors of educational research easily manifested as a hierarchical structure for the communication and exercise of pedagogical power (see also Bernstein 2000).

Boyer, Schön and others said that this situation was inappropriate for education, especially higher education, whose philosophical commitments to growth and nurturing needed to manifest themselves as caring and supportive relationships. New epistemologies were therefore required that celebrated the capacity of all to exercise their originality and critical engagement, in order to find new forms of working through the development of communicative action. Schön believed that a new epistemology for a new scholarship would emerge from action research, in which practitioners focused on investigating and improving their own practice. The location of educational theory could be seen as within the practice, and the generation of educational theories of practice would emerge from the systematic study of the practice. Consequently, the focus of research would shift from a spectator perspective, with the aim of producing a theory about the practice, into a study of an educational practice from the perspective of the researcher themselves, with the aim of producing a theory that could account for the practice and show how the practitioner was prepared to hold themselves accountable for their work and the values that inspired the work.

This new form of theorising has been developed extensively, especially by Jack Whitehead and others at the University of Bath, and by Jean McNiff and others at St Mary's University College, and is now receiving considerable attention in the educational research community, especially in terms of how it can provide insights into what has become a critical issue in deciding the future of educational research, namely, how to assess quality in educational research and what kinds of criteria and standards of judgement are appropriate for the task (Whitehead 2004a, 2005; McNiff and Whitehead 2006; Whitehead and McNiff 2006). We authors, Ana and Jean, address these issues now, especially in terms of their relevance to our context of introducing new epistemologies into our institutions. The question for us becomes, how do we demonstrate our accountability by producing our own living educational theories that contain the explicitly articulated standards we use to make judgements about the educational quality of our work? Further, if our aim is to develop new institutional epistemologies that reflect the same democratic impulses of the new South African social order, how do we show our capacity to transform our nominated criteria of social validity (Habermas 1987) into new criteria of ethical validity, and then transform the abstract criteria into critical living standards of judgement, in order to show the commensurability of our ontological and epistemological values and their transformation into egalitarian practices that are life-affirming for all?

We address these issues in turn. First we outline our understanding of Jack Whitehead's idea of living educational theories. Second we explain how we understand the idea of critical living standards of judgement. Third we explain the importance of showing the nature of the relationship between criteria of social validity and the realisation of educational values as the manifestation of the ethical validity of our social and methodologically rigorous scholarly practices.

The idea of living educational theories

This idea was developed by Jack Whitehead in the 1970s, in response to the then dominant disciplines approach in education, which stated that education could be studied

via its constitutive disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy and history (Peters 1966; Hirst 1983). The form of theory thus generated would be grounded in the study of the conceptual issues developed within the different disciplines. While immensely valuable in offering insights into such concepts, however, this approach did not contribute to, or acknowledge the need for, a personal understanding of practice in which the enquirer asked questions of the kind, 'How do I understand what I am doing? How do I evaluate my work? How do I improve it?' (see Whitehead 1989). Indeed, it did not even allow for the expression of such questions. The idea of asking questions about the nature of one's own practice and how it may be possible to improve the practice was grounded in the personal knowledge of the enquirer, a form of knowledge that was radically different from the conceptual knowledge of the disciplines approach, and that took as its guiding principle a deep commitment to ontological values. However, adherents to propositional forms of knowledge dismissed as invalid any personal forms that embraced living contradictions within the personal theory. Popper (1963), for example, said of dialectical theory that 'it was a loose and woolly way of thinking', and so a 'theory which involves a contradiction is therefore entirely useless *as a theory'* (page 317, emphasis in original). Consequently, the development of the idea of practitioners creating and generating their own personal theories of education, and the struggle to legitimate this idea, became one of the core debates of the 1990s UK educational research community (see for example Newby 1994). The idea has however now been well established and legitimated, and a large and significant knowledge base exists to attest to this fact (see below) through the production of masters and doctoral dissertations and theses, which have been validated by universities in the UK, such as the University of the West of England and the University of Bath, in North American universities, such as Brock and McGill Universities, and now in South African universities, such as the University of Johannesburg.

A distinctive feature in the creation of living educational theories is that the descriptions and explanations that a researcher offers for their practice constitute their own theory of practice. The descriptions show the processes of the improvement of practice through learning, and the explanations show how the researcher's own ontological values can

manifest in practice as the guiding explanatory principles for their life. For example, the value of freedom comes to manifest as a living out of freedom, that is, living in a way that is free. The value of democracy manifests as a form of living in which people respectfully listen to one another, valuing the capacity of the other to think and act independently and from the grounds of their own ontological authority. The concept of a value, say Raz (2001), is an abstraction, a linguistic term that denotes how we hold a particular thing or practice as valuable or worthwhile. For the value to take on meaning in a person's life, the value itself needs to be transformed into a living practice, to show how it acts as an explanatory principle. In other words, when a person says that they try to live according to their values, they are saying that they can explain why they act as they do. They offer explanations, in the form of their living educational theories, for their practices. In Whitehead's (2004) terms, our embodied values come to act as the explanatory principles of our lives.

As noted, a major and significant knowledge base now exists to show that this approach has been widely accepted and validated by the practitioner research community and the academic research community alike. Following the call of Catherine Snow (2001), then President of the American Educational Research Association, for the development of a knowledge base that would systematise the contributions of teachers to assist other teachers' learning, a coherent knowledge base has been put together, that contains the books and papers of scholars working in the field, as well as the validated masters and doctoral dissertations and theses of large numbers of practitioners world wide. You can access this knowledge base via the printed papers and books of ourselves and colleagues, and also via our and their websites (www.actionresearch.net and www.jeanmcniff.com) .

We now turn to the idea of establishing critical living standards of judgement for assessing the quality of practitioners' accounts of practice.

Critical living standards of judgement

A recent event served to foreground the need for addressing issues of assessing quality in educational research. This was a conference in May 2005, hosted by the British Educational Research Association, about the future of educational research in the UK. The conference addressed, among other themes, the idea of assessing quality in educational research, on the grounds that only research that was demonstrated to be of top quality could qualify as contributing to public debates to inform the future of educational policy and practice. The main recommendation of the conference was that the social sciences should continue as the main form of educational research. While newer forms of practitioner research were widely respected as contributing significantly to new practices, they did not yet demonstrate the necessary internal validity to qualify for serious consideration as a form of credible educational research (Furlong *et al*. 2000; Furlong and Oancea 2005). This internal validity had to be demonstrated by the development and establishment of appropriate standards of judgement.

We, Ana and Jean, take this point very seriously, so now we show how we draw on some of the most recent work in this area to develop the kinds of standards of judgement we use to make judgements on our own practices and theories.

We draw especially on the work of Jack Whitehead (2003, 2004a and b, 2005), who speaks about the need to show how a practitioner's embodied ontological values can transform into their critical living epistemological standards of judgement. He is communicating the idea that the ontological values, held at a deep tacit level, and that take an abstract form when communicated as linguistic items, can be externalized in human practices that manifest as the value in question. The value of freedom, say, exists on the printed page as an abstract linguistic item. When people begin practising in a way that embodies the value of freedom, they begin by showing how they respect others' capacity to be free by not seeking to impose or dominate in any form. Democracy is a procedural value that we seek to live by. We agree with Bernstein when he says:

> First of all, there are the conditions for an effective democracy. I am not going to
> derive these from high-order principles. I am just going to announce them. The

first condition is that people must feel that they have a stake in society. Stake may be a bad metaphor, because by stake I mean that not only are people concerned to receive something but that they are also concerned to give something. This notion of stake has two aspects to it, the receiving and the giving. People must feel that they have a stake in both senses of the term.

Second, people must have confidence that the political arrangements they create will realise this stake, or give grounds if they do not. In a sense it does not matter too much if this stake is not realised, or only partly realised, providing there are good grounds for it not being realised or only partly realised.

(Bernstein 2000: xx)

The value of democracy can be demonstrated ostensively when people agree to work together, in ways that respect the other as of equal status and worth. It is however straightforward enough to speak the language of values, but difficult to enact them as living practices, because values enactment involves more than intellectual or scholarly engagement and demands emotional and ontological commitment, not only to the value in question but to the other people who are participants in the practices that the value informs. Consequently, in a post-apartheid South Africa, saying that one lives by the values of democracy needs to be demonstrated by both a verbal commitment to upholding the value and also an ontological and practical commitment to living by the value. For many, this can mean wrestling with the ontological insecurities of transforming existing logics of domination into new inclusive practices within the new post-apartheid culture.

The situation becomes doubly entrenched however when it is a question of transforming existing logics of domination into new inclusive epistemologies within a post-apartheid democratic university culture. Given, as Schön (1995) explained (see above), that the western intellectual tradition is underpinned by a centuries-long tradition of propositional thought, and given that the academy is the most intensive articulation of established modes of thinking, to introduce new inclusive epistemologies into a context whose

normative propositional epistemological values and logics are those of divisiveness and objectification implies transforming the very logics, values and understandings of its participants. This can seriously threaten the ontological security of many who wish to remain at the level of intellectual engagement but do not wish to take the next step, necessary in our opinion, to probe the very mental structures by which they define their own positioning in the world. Doing this means that there is no going back. Polanyi (1958) says of such processes, 'I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I have made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently' (page 143). Once we willfully make the self-conscious decisions to change our minds, those minds are changed forever. We change ourselves into new persons, thinking and seeing things differently, and there is no right of return.

So if we say we wish to live in the direction of our values of freedom and democracy, in terms of our social values in our personal and social practices, and in terms of our epistemological values in our scholarly and organizational practices, we need to show how we live in the direction of those values. In terms of the claim of us authors that we are developing new inclusive epistemologies within our universities, we therefore need to show how we are transforming our personal and social relationships, and our organizational practices that reflect the nature of those relationships, by producing evidence-based claims that we are having some influence. Further, if we take these claims as our unit of appraisal, our serious scholarly claims in this paper, we need to show how we live by the values of freedom and democracy by honouring the critical engagement of our scholarly audience, and show the internal validity of our claim by producing the evidence of demonstrating, through focusing on articulating our own critical standards of judgement, our awareness of the need to judge our scholarship as well as our practices. We show how we are meeting already articulated and agreed standards of rigour (Winter 1989) in attending to the need to articulate our values and show their living transformation in our lives in order to prevent the kind of potential contradictions that Berlin (2002) spoke about (see above) of imposing freedom or engaging with the rhetoric of transformation while living in a way, informed by a

traditional logic of domination (Marcuse 1964), that remains committed to outmoded and unjust epistemological practices.

Here is an account of how we are beginning to do this.

Developing new action research-based practices at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Over the last two years we have encouraged and supported members of the Faculty of Education to engage with the ideas of the new scholarship, and produce their scholarly accounts to show how they are doing so. Our activities have taken the form of the practical provision of a staff development programme, through which staff can engage deeply with ideas about the underpinning epistemological and methodological assumptions of action research, including its values and logics. We have encouraged and supported them as they undertake their action enquiries to show how they hold themselves accountable for their practices. A dedicated action research group has been set up in our Faculty, consisting of a floating population of about fourteen people. These people meet regularly to share their research, and time and practical resources are allocated for them to do this. Colleagues from other faculties join the group from time to time. Our hope is to encourage the production of scholarly papers to show how as a group we are focusing on our own explanations of our learning as a unit of appraisal, and how we are engaging in the practice of transforming our ontological values into the epistemological standards of judgement we use to test the validity of our explanations. Our initiative is still new. Consequently, and also given that this is labour intensive and emotionally demanding work, not many accounts are yet available to provide an empirical evidence base for our claims, but these are beginning to emerge (for example Olivier and Wood 2006; Wood *et al*. 2005).

At a practical level, we have evidence to show how faculty members are benefiting professionally from the support we offer for the research group. Here are the edited

minutes of a meeting held on 15th July 2006 at NMMU, supplied by Lesley Wood, the action research group convener.

Report on Action Research Meeting – some bullets for interest

- *Action Research Projects*

Some interesting projects were presented, using the action plan format circulated earlier. Some of the questions being researched are (still working titles)

  - *How can I improve my supervision of students?*
  - *How can I better support teachers to implement their learning in schools?*
  - *How can I help my clients to unleash the healing potential of their spirituality?*
  - *How can I improve my management practices so as to create a caring climate in the Faculty?*

Some very stimulating discussion arose out of this which helped the researchers to refine their action plans. Others are still grappling with ideas and these were discussed and fleshed out.

- *Additional points raised in discussion*

We had an interesting discussion on Foucault and his metaphor of the panopticon and how it applies to our educational system. For those interested I am attaching some web links to useful information on this.

It was agreed that action research is invaluable for teaching practice and that our students need to be exposed to it from first year. Teaching it in a one semester module in fourth year will not allow students sufficient time really to become reflective practitioners and to internalise the importance of living out values in everyday practice.

If the faculty engages in action research, then it may encourage people to become more responsible for their actions and more proactive. It could also help to improve relationships between us all.

*What we are doing as a faculty is a first and we intend to publish our collective accounts. **Everyone** is invited to submit their own narratives of their self-enquiry and we will collate these as a publication to show how our faculty is contributing to the transformation of education.*

*The **next meeting is on 19 September** in the Music Room and Jean will be with us. Those who wish to can 'flesh out' the first three questions of the action plan to present to colleagues for discussion:*

- *What is my context and my concern?*
- *Why am I concerned?*
- *What kind of experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?*

This group is a support for all, so if anyone wants to send their ideas electronically to me between meetings, please feel free to do so or come and chat about your ideas for action research.

Most importantly, we authors are aware, in our positions as academic leaders, that we also need to show how we are doing this. We accept the fundamental Kantian moral principle that no one should expect another to do something they are not prepared first to do themselves. This is especially important for academic leaders, who themselves claim that they are engaging in new scholarships, and is a core aspect of organizational practice if they wish to claim that they are demonstrating democratic leadership (Grace 1995). It is also core to any claim that they are claiming ethical validity for their scholarship, since claims need to show their internal validity through the production of empirical evidence in relation to identified standards of judgement that test the validity of the claim. In saying this we are clearly not supporting the view that statements of fact and statements

of value form independent realms of discourse. This paper is our first published articulation of our claim, and our first attempt to generate empirical evidence for our claim. Evidence of the growth of our understanding is however already in the public domain. In Whitehead and McNiff (2006), Jean explains the processes of the growth of her own understanding of the need to interrogate her whiteness, how she takes steps to do so in company with academic colleagues, and the kind of ontological and intellectual transformations incurred. This kind of account is radically different from the traditional propositional accounts of the need to interrogate whiteness (for example Jacobson 1998), by showing the processes in action, including the deep ontological insecurities involved, and their transformation into a more enlightened intellectual engagement and improved personal and social action through the struggle. A second paper (Naidoo and McNiff 2005) further develops these themes. We hope to develop our evidence base through the intensification of our research efforts and the production of our scholarly books and papers.

We now raise critical questions about the claims we are making in this paper. Do we show that we engage with the social criteria of comprehensibility, truth, sincerity and appropriateness, which Habermas (1976) says are the basis of communicative action? Do we show that we are conducting our social and scholarly practices in terms of our ontological values commitments? Do we show the rigour of our own research in demonstrating our capacity to engage with the issues of articulating our critical standards of judgement, and showing explicitly how we are attempting to fulfil them in our personal and social practices? We claim that we are doing this by focusing explicitly on the articulation of our ontological values as our critical standards of judgement and an explication of how we are transforming those values into the critical epistemological standards of judgement whereby we assess the validity of our social and scholarly practices. In our current institutional practice, we are aiming to develop inclusional epistemologies for a new scholarship of democratic educational enquiry. We explain here how we consistently try to realize our abstract values of freedom and democracy through the kinds of social and institutional practices that encourage freedom and democratic ways of working. We engage with the idea of 'theory of mind' (Hayes 1994), the idea

that we recognize others as having the capacity to exercise their originality and critical judgement. We try to realize those same values in our scholarship through the very practice of showing how we transform into action our awareness of the need to show how we are assessing our work, through the articulation of our critical standards of judgement and their realization in our living organizational and scholarly practices, such as the production and presentation of this paper. We do this because we recognize our scholarly audience also as exercising their capacity to mediate our influence through their originality and critical judgement, as Said (1994: 14) says is how Valéry communicated the idea of influence to his friend Mallarmé, and make judgements on the validity and integrity of our claims to knowledge.

Demonstrating ethical validity

We are claiming that we are evaluating our work in the most stringent terms and thereby demonstrating our awareness of and capacity for showing the rigorous nature of our organizational and scholarly practices. We are also claiming that by doing so we can claim that ours is an ethical practice, in the sense that we act towards others as we would have them act towards us. This is however quick-sands territory, because, while it is possible, as we are doing here, to speak about these things, and even to produce authenticated evidence that we are doing these things in relation to our social practices, it is virtually impossible to show that we are also doing them in relation to our ontological practices, that is, producing evidence for the fact that we have literally changed our minds. The only evidence we can honestly produce is our statement that this is so. The rest has to go on trust, and in the idea that truth will emerge honestly and over time through a commitment to authenticity (Habermas 1976).

To try to strengthen the validity of our research, therefore, we intend in future specifically to focus on developing its evidence base, with a special focus on how we can extend our engagement with the literatures of post-colonialism, with their current emphasis on dismantling the logics of domination in socio-political and cultural practices (Ashcroft *et al*. 1998), into a new transformative emphasis on dismantling the epistemological

hegemonies of forms of scholarship. We intend to focus on the production of our own scholarly work, which will incorporate our explanations for how and why we encourage others also to focus on the production of their scholarly work. Our immediate administrative tasks include the development of the basic services in our Faculty to encourage the practice of democracy as freedom (Sen 1999). These services include intensifying the current provision of a high-quality academic staff development initiative that will provide the necessary intellectual, practical and emotional supports necessary for raising the research capacity of the staff within the wider context of the realization of the development of new democratic epistemologies. We aim also to develop institutional research links between our two universities and faculties of education. We hope that our efforts will provide the basis for the development of an important new knowledge base that will have implications for the future of educational research in South Africa, and that will show its potentials both as a form of social solidarity that will contribute to South Africa's renaissance, and also for the education of social formations (Whitehead 2004) in relation to new forms of democratic practices and scholarship on a global scale. This kind of effort and its practical realization will, we trust, show that we are true to our words when we say that we are committed to social and epistemological freedom and the equal active participation of all participants in the discourses.

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