Methodological Theory Annotated Bibliography

September 27, 2004

1- Brulin, G. (2001). The third task of universities or how to get universities to serve their communities. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 440-446). London: Sage.

Beginning this chapter with reference to a 1997 law change in Sweden that legislated the obligation of universities to serve their communities, the author then examines the justification for such a relationship and explores the implications for action research. Clearly recognizing the challenges to the traditional research, this chapter positively embraces university-community action research as both fulfilling the goals of action research and bringing relevance to university research. The author stresses the importance of establishing the dialogue processes that support research partnerships and the need to recognize where knowledge-creating processes may take place. The chapter concludes by describing community-university action research networks that have been recently established to support this type of research project.

This chapter represents a summary of issues that are evident early in the development of this new approach to action learning and, as such, it is valuable in alerting researchers to the demands of community-university action research partnerships.

2- Schein, E. H. (2001). Clinical inquiry/research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 228-237). London: Sage.

This chapter presents a model of research design based on high and low levels of researcher involvement. Eight cells are identified, four representing research initiated by researcher or consultants and four representing research initiated by subject or clients. The nature of research in each cell is described, the implications for roles and research design and the applicability of project outcomes.

In the changing context of client driven and researcher driven projects, this chapter presents an extremely useful model for understanding the relationships of participants in research and positioning roles.

3- Torbet, W. R. (2001). The practice of action inquiry. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.). *Handbook of action research*. London: Sage.

In a broad discussion on the nature of research relationships, this chapter frames the researcher-researched relationship in terms of first, second or third person. The author describes first person research relationships as those that emphasise personal change or inquiry, second person as research practices that cover a gambit of dialogic relations and third person represents leadership and power structures that may or may not work to question unilateral authority in research practice.

The unique structure of the discussion in this paper models, in itself, the challenges and opportunities for different relationships that present day research practice can embrace. The chapter presents a thought-provoking model to understand research relationships and, in particular, researcher roles as they relate to power.

4- Cocklin, B. (1996). Applying qualitative research to adult education: Reflections upon analytic processes. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 28*(1), 88-116.

In this paper, the focus of the author's PhD research on the process of becoming an adult student in a New Zealand secondary school, takes a secondary focus to his examination of the process of research itself. Through his qualitative data gathering, the author describes the changes and developments in his approach to his study, from beginning the project with a preconceived theoretical stance, to recognizing themes in qualitative data that then lead to changes and refinement of the research focus. The paper describes the process of data gathering and analysis and examines the challenge of both being in the process of research and trying to clarify the process of research into a coherent story in itself.

Through the author's continuous awareness of his role in the research, his examination of processes and his willingness to adapt as the research relationship emerged, this paper offers a valuable insight in to the research challenges, specifically the challenge of reflection-in-action.

5 -Singer, J. A. (2004). Narrative identity and meaning making across the lifespan: An introduction. *Journal of Personality, 72*(3), 437-459.

Written from a psychological perspective with the purpose of synthesizing several papers in a journal dedicated to narrative research, this paper offers a useful affirmation of narrative research and an overview of narrative research practices. The paper examines the variety of ways researchers relate to complex influences that construct identities while affirming identity as a process not constrained by metaphors of universality. Of particular interest is discussion on the influence of defensiveness in the specificity of narrative detail.

This paper presents a broad outline of the application of narrative research, the embedding of this approach in theory and the variety of approaches to its use. As such it offers useful background, affirmation for narrative approaches as well as scoping further potential research applications and indicating implications for research instrument design.

6- Beech, N., MacIntosh, R., MacLean, D., Shepherd, J., & Stokes, J. (2002). Exploring constraints on developing knowledge. *Management Learning, 33*(4), 459-475.

Following a concise summary of three diverse research perspectives, this paper analyses a meeting in high-tech design and manufacturing company from the perspectives discussed. The apparent failure of the meeting to generate any specific outcome is examined. The process of the meeting and the limitations on the generation of knowledge is explored from the perspectives of organizational psychodynamics, social constructionist and complexity theory. The analysis from each perspective indicates a variety of reasons for the apparent lack of progress with the authors concluding that a lack of conflict within the group was a significant factor in the stalled progress.

By analyzing one event from three different perspectives, variations in interpretation and significance are highlighted and the paper emerges as a useful document melding theoretical stances with practical applications, indicating ways in which these perspectives may be applied to observation and interpretation of data.

7- Holford, J. (1995). Why social movements matter: Adult education theory, cognitive praxis, and the creation of knowledge. *Adult Education Quarterly, 45*(2), 95-111.

The central tenet examined in this paper is the relationship between adult education and social movements in society. Following discussion on the theory of social movements, the author proposes that the most crucial understanding in the relationship between adult education and social movement is in the way social movements generate their own knowledge and that contexting this knowledge in studies of adult education, positions education as agent of social change.

This paper offers useful theoretical discussion for consideration in research design, particularly highlighting awareness of the role of adult education as an agent of social change. Recognition of the social change culture that embodies aspects of adult education has implications for both the study of participants, course providers and stakeholder groups in an adult education environment.

8- Haggis, T. (2004). Meaning, identity and 'motivation': Expanding what matters in understanding learning in higher education? *Studies in Higher Education, 29*(3), 335-352.

Noting the dominance of psychological models in pedagogical discourse, this paper describes a study using complexity theory to analyse individual narratives of higher education to expand layers of meaning in stories. The author of this paper asserts the importance of analysis that reveals the multiplicity of factors that impact on individuals as they engage in adult education without compromising these in striving for generic principles or broad cognitive descriptors. The paper presents excerpts of transcripts and analysis, demonstrating the way such techniques allow the complex relationships of meaning in education experiences to emerge, highlighting aspects of the learning experience that would be lost in more orthodox analysis that aims to derive general categories or themes. Concluding the paper with a discussion on the implications of awareness of difference to education, the author challenges assumptions of mainstream pedagogy suggesting that adult education needs to shift toward teaching critical examination of discursive practices in context specific situations.

This paper is valuable not only for the theoretical base but for its demonstration of a practical application of this position and careful discussion of the implications for a shift in perspective. Suggesting the possibility of a way of thinking that will challenge many assumptions held in research, this paper is indicative of future directions in research and theory development in adult education.

9 –Scottish Executive. (2001). *Listening to learners: Consultation with learners about adult literacy education in Scotland*. Retrieved 23 March 2004, from http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/lifelong/alltl.pdf

One of a series of well presented reports summarizing findings from a comprehensive survey of learner views on adult education in Scotland, this report provides excellent insights into the meaning of adult education experiences. Areas covered include course content, accessing learning opportunities, diversity of need and support systems. The report concludes with a series of learner recommendations.

Generously supported with quotes from interviewees, this report is valuable in demonstrating both a structure to cover the breadth of issues impacting on the adult education experience and the variety of individual experiences that will not be adequately recognized in a more empirical survey approach.

10 – Scottish Executive (2001). *Adult Literacy in Scotland: Household survey report*. Retrieved 14 March 2004, from http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/lifelong/alrhs-00.asp

Reporting data gathered from 1,890 face-to-face interviews across Scotland in 2000, this report concentrates on uses of literacy skills at work and at home.

The report offers extremely useful information not only as an example of a survey method to assess literacy across a community, but also in the findings themselves and in relationships between these findings and demographic data. The questionnaire used in this survey is attached with the report.

11 – Scottish Executive (2001). *Adult literacy in Scotland: Employer survey report*. Retrieved 14 March 2004, from http://www.basic-skills-observatory.co.uk/uploads/doc_uploads/653.pdf

This report presents data gathered in 2000 from 1500 telephone interviews of employers in a variety of industry sectors, operating varying sized businesses across Scotland. The survey presents employers views on literacy needs at work, recruitment related priorities, perceived changes in skill needs and skill gaps, the relationship of skills with productivity and descriptions of training and quality systems.

This report, one of several completed by the Scottish Executive 'Literacy 2000', offers an extremely useful foundation model of methodology and content focus for addressing literacy needs in a business community.

12 – Scottish Executive. (2001). *Adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland*. Retrieved 24 March 2004, from http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/lifelong/alan-00.asp

As part of a series of reports on the literacy needs of Scotland, this report interprets data and makes key recommendations to target literacy needs across population sectors. Based on survey information more than any theoretical base, this report offers practical insights into a policy response to a community need.

As with all the Edinburgh reports, this offers excellent base information upon which to structure further data collection or position policy initiatives and, as such, is an extremely valuable support paper for any pragmatically oriented adult literacy project.

13 - Sumara, D. (2000). Critical issues: Researching complexity. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(2), 267 - 281.

Drawing on complexity theory principles, the author describes interpretations of key aspects of learning: intelligence, self, mind, and reading in examining the implications of these aspects of learning to the process of reading. As complexity theory asserts that intelligence is neither fully biologically determined, nor constructed through social interactions or the environment, the understanding of learning demands an understanding of how different learning experiences affect learners.

While the implications of this complexity theory understanding learning for adult education are not addressed, this paper signals a dramatic shift in pedagogical and research practice based on complexity theory's recognition of the multiple relationships that impact on a learner and their learning experience.

14 - Sumara, D. (2002). Creating commonplaces for interpretation: Literary anthropology and literacy education research. *Journal of Literacy Research, 34*(2), 237-260.

Much of this article describes literary anthropology, a term the author uses for the process of reflection on repetitive reading of texts over time. This process, based in the complexity theory principle that relationships between the reader or learner and the material being read is the most valid focus of study, has been developed by the author from both a learner and teacher perspective with growing recognition of their potential application for literacy research. The theoretical position and the practice of literary anthropology provide a structure for the study of the relationship between literacy and identity development.

While not focussed directly to adult literacy, this paper signals important future directions in the research design and methodology for adult literacy and, in particular, for examining the relationship of learning and identity development.

15 - Engestrom, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work, 14*(1), 133-156.

In providing a comprehensive description of activity theory and expansive learning, this paper presents a matrix model that offers expansive alternative interpretations of learning at work. Four fundamental questions are asked concerning: the subjects of learning and who is defining them; why they learn and what motivates them; what they learn and they key processes of learning; and how they learn. By addressing the questions through an activity theory framework, the result is a multiple array of interpretations of learning activity.

This strongly theoretical paper, offers potential for research design and methodology with both depth and breadth in the field of adult learning.

16 - Larner, W., & Mayow, T. (2003). Strengthening communities through local partnerships: Building a collaborative research project. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*(20), 119-133.

This paper describes a collaborative research project involving the University of Auckland and the Waitakere City Council examining the effectiveness of local partnerships. Acknowledging the significance of such research in social policy development, the authors assert that hierarchical funding structures and institutional cultures still support an exclusive hegemony.

While reference to current theory and research would have added to the rigour of this paper, nevertheless it presents interesting insights into the challenges of such research partnerships.