Policy and Professional Practice Research Network Seminar

Tuesday 10 June 2:00 – 5:00PM (Bldg A35; Rm 612)

Quality research into professional practice: emerging and continuing challenges.

Presenters: Professor Andrew Gonczi, Professor Susan Groundwater-Smith & Nicole Mockler

Respondent: Dr Karl Maton, Department of Sociology and Social Policy

Overview of Andrew’s contribution:
Under the impact of a US education system which is performing badly and the failure of educational researchers to provide ready solutions, there has been a strong movement to make educational research more "scientific". The National Research Council in its 2002 and 05 publications has attempted to define the nature of this kind of research and to mandate it. But as others have pointed out this is an affront to innovation and should be resisted.

Andrew will look at the arguments for and against this approach and canvass the question of standards for research more generally. It is not about absolute standards. Rather the need to think hard about justifying the kind of frameworks that we use and thinking about what is quality within these frameworks. Specifically he will look at action research and design based research and consider their relative merits.

Suggested preparatory readings:
Freeman, M., deMarrais, K., Preissle, J. Roulston, K. St Pierre, E. A. (2007) Standards of Evidence in Qualitative Research: An Incitement to Discourse, Educational Researcher, Vol. 36, Iss. 1; p. 25
And the special edition on Design Based vol 32, no. 1 ( 2003).

Overview of Susan and Nicole’s contribution:
Practitioner Inquiry has the potential to move beyond being an implementation tool for employing authorities and policy makers in the field of education. However, this potential cannot be achieved unless a critical stance is adopted towards current practices and the neo-liberal, relatively conservative agenda that underpin them. We shall examine the press to compliance and argue that a new kind of professional knowledge, building upon systematic inquiry, is essential if we are to move practice forward in an emancipatory fashion. We shall present an overview of some of the current problematics in professional inquiry, how they have arisen and how they might be transcended.

The presentation will consider some of the concerns that relate to the quality of practitioner inquiry and present celebratory mode.

We shall draw on some of the substance in our forthcoming book Teacher Professional Learning in an Age of Compliance - Mind the Gap! that engages principally with arguments for teacher professional learning based upon forms of teacher inquiry and the dilemmas, perils and challenges that such a stance brings.

Suggested preparatory readings:
(Both were originally presented in Research Papers in Education, Policy and Practice (2007), 22 (2) available on-line)