How Can Individual Self-Studies Contribute to a Web of Betweeness?
How Can I Become We Without Losing I?

Margaret Farren and Darragh Power

Dublin City University

ABSTRACT
Information and Communications technology (ICT) has assumed an increasingly important role in society, in the way people communicate with each other, and do business. It would seem logical that educational providers take account of technological developments as they seek to develop teaching and learning. If ICT is to play an effective role in professional development of teachers certain needs must be addressed over and above the provision of ICT training. This paper will show how these needs have been addressed in the context of the professional development of teachers on a Masters in Education and Training (ICT). Some of these needs include: developing a greater awareness of the potential of ICT as a tool and as a medium to support teaching and learning; developing new and appropriate knowledge and skills in using ICT in teaching and learning; developing a greater awareness of the ways ICT affects the ways we think about, organize and practice teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION
The context of the paper is the M.Sc. in Education and Training (ICT) a two-year part-time programme run by Education Studies at Dublin City University. The M.Sc. in Education and Training consists of a Leadership strand and ICT strand. In addition to a number of core module, participants on the ICT strand take the following three modules; Educational Applications of Multimedia, Pedagogies and Learning Technology and Online Learning Environments. Participants on the programme are drawn from training, further and higher education, primary and post-primary and community education. Margaret Farren is a higher education educator based in Education Studies at Dublin City University. She co-ordinate and teaches on the Masters programme. Darragh Power works in training and is a participant on the ICT strand of the programme.

PURPOSE OF PRESENTATION
The purpose of this presentation is

- To explore how I, as higher education educator, have influenced the professional development of teachers, using an action research approach.

- To provide space for teachers' own voices.

- To explore the concept of educational knowledge.

- To explore how each individual self-study can contribute to a web of betweeness.

- To explore the role of e-media in this context.

MARGARET'S NARRATIVE
In the course of this presentation, I will show how my educational knowledge is developed through my practice as I engage teacher-participants in enquiries into their own learning as they ask and research and answer the question; how can I improve my practice? I am referring to educational knowledge as professional knowledge i.e. knowledge that is intrinsically linked to practice. The growth of my educational knowledge involves a dual role: myself as a learner, as I enquire into my own learning, and myself in relation to others, as I endeavour to engage them in a process of reflection and enquiry into their own educational practice using ICT.

I believe that in order for me, as higher education educator, to support teacher-participants to reflect on their practice, I must reflect on my own practice. It is not merely a constructivist process in which the teacher-

participants on a professional development programme construct understanding of their practice, I will also be influenced by the process and will influence the process. In 1995, Schon pointed to the need for a new epistemology for the new scholarship. The principles I am communicating (as sound principles) are both the practical principles (or embodied values) I use to explain my learning/practice and the epistemological (living) standards of judgement I am using in my contribution to the epistemology for the new scholarship of educational enquiry.

In this presentation, I will clarify the meaning of the education values, which have emerged through my practice. I will show how these ontological values have become epistemological standards of judgement and show who I am as an educator and educational researcher as I bring my living standards of educational judgement into the Academy through making public my embodied knowledge as an educator in higher education. Whitehead (2003) believes that we can use value-based standards of judgment in accounting to ourselves and to others for our own learning, our educational influences with others and in our influences in the education of social formation. I will show how I have encouraged teacher-participants on the ICT programme to account for their own educational development and live their values more fully in their practice. The ontological and epistemological significance of moving from 'I' to 'We' emphasises the relational knowing in I/We relationships in which 'I' is not lost in the 'We' but engages in relational processes of educational enquiry involving I-We relationships.

My educational values
The values that have emerged from my own practice as a higher education educators include;

• Valuing the creativity/originality of mind, critical judgements, values and desire for enquiry learning, on the part of teachers.

• Support teachers to use ICT in a way that is meaningful for their practice.

• Commitment to dialogue.

• Enabling them to construct their own narrative of their own learning in relation with others.

• Understanding education as a holistic: intellectual, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic, social interactive process…

Philosophy of Action
Arentdt's philosophy of action focuses on describing and evaluating the various forms of human activity rather than focusing, like most western philosophers have done, on evaluating the products of human thought (Elliott, 2004). Arendt points to three basic modes of human activity: Labour, Work and Action. 'Action' involves initiating change in a social situation to bring about something new in a web of social relationships that constitute it. Arendt believes that action is carried out in communication with other and requires the qualities of plurality and natality. 'Action' is plural in that the agent reveals one's own view but it is developed in communication with others and accommodates their own distinctive outlooks, 'people define themselves, creating their own unique identities and the possibility for action in relationship with others' (Coulter, 2002). Equally important for Arendt is the agency of others – their natality. "Each person has the capacity to begin something new, something totally unforeseen" (Coulter, 2002, p199). My view of education is that it is holistic involving an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic, social interactive process.

In his paper 'The struggle to redefine the relationship between 'knowledge' and 'action' in the academy: some reflections on action research', Elliott points out that 'one can provide a meaningful account of action research as a process of theorizing about a practical situation. This will involve challenging the assumptions that the term 'theory' exclusively refers to generalisable representations of events, which can only be produced under conditions that are dissociated from the intentions of agents to effect change in practical situations.'

In this presentation, I will present examples of online dialogue between teacher-participants and myself as I support them in their educational enquiries. My role was not to set the curriculum but to explore jointly with teachers how we could co-create a curriculum through mutual dialogue. I will show how through online dialogue I supported each to articulate his/her own educational values. My starting point in this programme is to encourage each participant to ask; what do I want to develop during the programme and how will it improve student learning? Barnett (2002) reminds us that 'The main pedagogical task in a university setting is not that of the transmission of knowledge but of promoting forms of human understanding appropriate to conditions of supercomplexity (the state of affairs where one is faced with alternative frameworks through which one make sense of one's world, and acts purposively in it).' In relation to e-learning, Steeples, Jones, and Goodyear (2001) rightly state that what seems to be offered under the idea of e-learning includes 'quick-fix' forms of

provision and support for learning in so-called online courses that are little more than an online provision of the course support materials that would otherwise be provided as part of a face-to-face traditional course. This type of course simply offers transmission of information and provides little or no opportunity for the learner to engage with tutors and peers. I hope to show how I have created a shared understanding through online dialogue with teacher participants. I have achieved this through mutual collaboration; involvement and dialogue in classroom setting and through technology to enable each teacher develop his/her own pedagogy. I show how I as higher education educator learn to be a critical companion of teacher-participants as I engage and support them through use of online learning technology.

Darragh Power is a participant on the programme. In his assignment for the Online Learning Environment module (submitted in January 2004), he outlines his own educational development and how he developed a Collaborative Resource sharing artefact in collaboration with other participants on the programme. This Resource can be used and built upon by future participants. Darragh presents his narrative.

DARRAGH'S NARRATIVE
Collaborative Resource sharing

The context of this study is the M.Sc. in Education and Training (ICT) class of 2003 / 2004. We have constructed learning and pedagogy related artefacts such as digital videos, websites, web quests, flash animations, Hyperstudio animations, and Stagecast simulations in our various practice contexts. Our various practice contexts have led us to adopt a variety of pedagogical approaches.

My educational values

My own educational values are the same as my values as a human being and I am conscious of the "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 2003) between my stated values and my actions in practice. I value collaboration and participation between people as a great way of facilitating learning. I value a social constructivist approach, and I value the sharing of information for the benefit of the group. I am aware that many people do not hold similar educational values and I value a conciliatory and consensus approach in circumstances of conflicting values. I believe that as a group we are developing a wide variety of technical, pedagogical and social resources and skills, and that the process of this development as well as the work produced will benefit from being shared. We can benefit from making explicit to each other and there may be benefits for others. Much of my own learning has taken place through social interaction with my classmates, particularly in terms of cognitive learning. My original plan was to build up a database of resources on Microsoft Access which could be interfaced through the web, to which all the class could contribute and use. This changed as the study progressed and the reasons for the changes are discussed below in the next section –

RATIONALE OF STUDY

The rationale of this study centers on socially constructed learning. For me learning is a shared experience defined by relationships and I am concerned with collaborating with my classmates to create a forum and space for an online 'community of practice' to borrow Etienne Wenger's term. The notion of a learning community is also increasing in popularity in literature. As Collins and Bielaczyc identify there are different characteristics of a learning community. Some of these include:

- A diversity of expertise among its members, who are valued for their contribution.
- A shared objective of continually advancing the collective knowledge/skills.
- An emphasis on learning how to learn.
- Mechanisms for sharing knowledge.
- Attempts to go beyond the boundaries of knowledge within the group.

My concern centered around sharing the diversity of expertise and providing a mechanism to support the collaborative sharing of knowledge, and bringing tacit knowledge to a public forum.

WHY A WEBSITE?

WebCT and Moodle as online learning forums allow for discussion but are less effective in the centralised compiling of resources that can be easily searched. From a personal perspective the firewall on the network in my workplace means that I cannot download any of the materials from Moodle or WebCT. In addition the navigation of resources in these sites often means visiting a discussion thread and then accessing the attachment to view a link. I designed the website with a view to making links more easily navigable. I hope in the coming months to give everyone in the class ftp access to upload their own notes, which would be one of my educational values, of empowering people to construct their own learning, and share it.

The site provides a forum for our own 'theory of the unique' (Van Manen 1991) and living educational theories (Whitehead 1993 cited in McNiff 2000) as well as being a portfolio of our educational work. One of the stated aims of action research is to make learning public and explicit. This website being based on collaboration in compiling resources will provide a forum for McNiff's (2002) idea of making our learning public and explicit. It also provides the opportunity for us as a group to highlight our research interests, and build a portfolio of pedagogic, technical and resources, which will help us later when it comes to implementing action research cycles in our own practice. It may also be a useful resource for other educational researchers, and I have asked other members of our class in the leadership stream if they wish to make a contribution. There is an email link on the photo gallery page, which emails the entire group.

From a personal perspective a website suits the skill set that I currently possess in terms of technical abilities. I have learned html and JavaScript in the last year. Using JavaScript allowed me to password protect the class notes page and use drop down menus for authors and class members' names. Another central motivating factor is that my background in education is in the field of post-colonial studies, (I hold an MA in Culture and Colonialism) and I wanted to make my knowledge in the area of post-colonial and critical theory explicit and offer the resources I've built up through a number of years to benefit the group. This value is informed by the spirit of Ubuntu – a person is a person through other people.

MY OWN LEARNING

Many of my educational values were validated in the building of this website. The social interactions of the class played an integral part in shaping my learning from the ambitious project of an online database to a more realistic community of practice approach using my existing technical skills. The act of constructing the site made me revisit previous learning such as my web quest from last year (http://student.dcu.ie/~powerd3/new) and website (http://student.dcu.ie/~powerd3) from which I collected all the links I had compiled last year including resources on Vygotsky, Dewey, Gagne and Bloom. I got the JavaScript for changing the colour of the scrolling bar from the source code of a fellow class member Claire Thomas' website from last year (http://homepage.eircom.net/~olvinfants/index.html). I changed the properties to match the colour scheme on the site. In addition to revisiting past learning I was also more focused on following up on names mentioned in class, such as Van Manen and Polyani, and as a result of this increased focus I collected links in relation to these theorists, and this broadened my reading base. The resources themselves are not significant unless they are used. I may add more features such as a hit counter etc, to get an idea of some of the usage. In addition I hope to review the links and get feedback from the other class members in the coming months.

I/WE ENQUIRIES

Margaret: In the following response by Darragh, it is clear how my 'I' is included within the 'We' without a feeling of loss of identity. The dialogical nature of our relationship is evident in which we can both use we without losing the integrity of our individual enquiries. The I/We relationships are crucial for understanding how individual self-studies can contribute to the web of betweeness.

Darragh: From my perspective, Altricher, Posch and Somekh's idea of a 'hierarchy of credibility' where by credibility of a 'practitioner researcher' (Schons terminology) depends on their position in relation to the policy makers or the theorists of the academy is challenged by Margaret's approach. (ibid 1993: 202). I am grateful that the ontological values which informs the epistemology of practice that Margaret employs in her 'pedagogy of the unique' allow me as a practitioner, in this case a practitioner of learning, in a group of learners, to have credibility in my own learning context, and being given space in this paper is evidence of this for me. For me the context of this narrative is a social one, and the ICT modules represented the first time in my educational experience I was asked what I wanted to study, in other words, it is the first time the curriculum was a co-creation of a mine and the other students and a lecturer. Margaret for our group represented not a gate-keeper of knowledge, but a de-constructor of gates, which allowed our individual and group narratives to emerge in our

own practice contexts where we are credible and knowledgeable of our own practice and practice contexts. My experience of Margaret's approach is that it is one where the web of betweeness is one, which is defined by sharing and not hierarchy, we are credible sources of knowledge in our own practice, and our experiences are shared, valued and publicly available to each other, which is what my artifact is about.

CONCLUSION

Among the many uses of ICT, it is useful to point to a few in the context of this presentation. Digital video has been used to record and reflect on classroom practice; ICT has mediated the teaching and learning process and helped shape our research enquiry and teaching practice through use of synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication: ICT has been used a tool and allowed teacher-participants to design and develop multimedia and web based artifacts that reflect own educational values; ICT has been used as a means of disseminating – Teacher-participants project work is currently available on http://webpages.dcu.ie/~farren/educators.htm Through use of ICT, we can show the growth of our own educational knowledge and how this connects with others.

The contribution to educational knowledge through the use of ICT in developing new standards of educational judgement has been highlighted in this paper. Through use of ICT, we can show the growth of our own educational knowledge and how this connects with others. In this 'stepping forward' new living standards of judgement are emerging in terms of a group of practitioner-researchers researching collaboratively in the development of their individual enquiries. Each individual researcher is bringing their own unique constellation of embodied values into the Academy as living standards of judgement. Each practitioner-researcher is also acknowledging the collaborative nature of their enquiries, through a web of betweeness, which is creatively and critically responsive to each enquirer and their knowledge-creation.

REFERENCES

Altrichter, H. Posch, P. and Somekh, B. (2000) Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to the methods of action research. (5th Edition). London and New York: Routledge.

Arendt, H (1958) *The Human Condition,* University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Bielaczyc and Collins. http://www.indiana.edu/~idtheory/chapter_12_summary.html accessed 15.196/1/2004.

Barnett, R. (1999) Realizing the University:in an age of supercomplexity , PA: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University.

Coulter, D. & Wiens, J. (2002) Educational Judgement: Linking the Actor

and the Spectator. Educational Researcher, Vol. 31, No.4, pp. 15-25.

Elliott, J. (2004) 'The struggle to redefine the relationship between 'knowledge' and 'action' in the academy: some reflections on action research.' www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/johnelliott.htm

McNiff, J. (2002) Action Research: Principles and Practice. Second Edition. Routledge/Falmer.

Schon, D. (1995) The New Scholarship requires a New Epistemology, Change, November/December.

Steeples, C. Jones, C, and Goodyear, P. (2001) Networked Learning. Springer Verlag; 1st edition

Van Manen (1991) The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness, Univ of Western Ontario.

Whitehead, J. (2003) The need for educational research that can participate in the creation and testing of living educational theories. A contribution to the symposium research for some? the threes answer back, at BERA 2003, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, 13 September, 2003.