Teacher Research

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With the "No Child Left Behind" legislation, there is a call for all federally funded education programs to be based on 'scientific research'. How 'scientific' is defined in this legislation has been critiqued as being positivist, narrow, and favoring experimental research. Yet within the educational research community, there is increased emphasis on the importance of context, teacher voice, and researcher-practitioner partnerships in addressing concerns in today's schools.

The articles in this section trace the philosophical roots of teacher research and exemplify the knowledge that can be gained when educators systematically investigate questions of practice to improve learning for their students. In the first article, Hendricks reviews the work of Lawrence Stenhouse, illustrating how his work from the 70's and 80's laid the groundwork for teacher research today. She illustrates how many of the questions and struggles Stenhouse raised are still alive today.

The Cuccaro article interrogates the impact of discipline referrals, examining who gets referred, how frequently, and with what impacts. His work exemplifies the connections between gender, class, special education label and referrals, illustrating clearly that referrals are connected to those attributes. Cuccaro questions the effectiveness of referrals and generates alternatives that might be more effective in meeting the needs of 'these' students.

In the final article, "Improving Novice Teachers' Communication Skills with Urban Families" Peter McDermott and Julia Johnson Rothenberg illustrates how professors can use action research to reflect on and assess the impact of their own teaching on preservice teachers' thinking. The design is rich in that coursework and fieldwork are integrated, and pre/post survey data reveals growth in preteachers' understanding of how to interact with and involve urban families. Much current research on community schools suggests that this is critical in meeting the needs of urban children.

Together these articles provide a rich collage of the work that is being done by practitioners to improve learning for those students most in need. Their work is systematic, recursive, contextualized, and focused on real the real challenges of leaving no child behind.

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A Review of the Work of Lawrence Stenhouse: Questions, Ambiguities, and Possibilities

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This article traces the work of Lawrence Stenhouse, an educator in Britain whose work with teachers in the 70s and 80s positively impacted the action research movement there. Stenhouse's innovative ideas about the role of the teacher in the research process, the nature of authority in educational research, and teachers' emancipation through knowledge can inform our current study of action research in education. Stenhouse's early death, which occurred just as he was making great strides in the study of practitioner research, left many of the questions and ambiguities he was struggling with unresolved. This article describes those questions and ambiguities and offers suggestions

Emancipation through knowledge

My interest in Lawrence Stenhouse, a British educator whose work in the teacher-as-researcher movement was cut short by his early death in 1982, originated when I stumbled across his article entitled "What Counts as Research?" published in 1981 in the *British Journal of Educational Studies*. Having just completed my second semester teaching an action research course for Master's degree students—and against my will at first, I must add, having been trained as a quantitative researcher—I was intrigued by Stenhouse's ideas about the role of the teacher in the research process. Spending two semesters with teachers engaged in research into their own practices was enough to transform my thinking about the nature of research, the role of the practitioner in

the research process, and the ways in which action research puts teachers in charge of their professional development. After reading more works by Stenhouse, I realized that the shift in my thinking mirrored Stenhouse's own journey from the culture of traditional academic research to a culture of classroom modes of inquiry by teachers. The questions he struggled to answer were the questions I, too, was grappling with: How can collaboration occur between academic researchers and teacher researchers so that research is useful to practitioners and adds to the knowledge base? How do we define rigor in action research studies? How do we alter the status of teacher researchers so that they are on equal footing with academic researchers?

Although Stenhouse's work ended just as the recent educational action research movement was beginning, there is much to be learned from his early work with teacher-researchers, particularly for those of us teaching and conducting action research studies in the United States where we still remain several years behind our colleagues from abroad. Stenhouse's work in Britain in the 70s and early 80s has had a lasting impact on the action research movement there, and by considering his experiences with teachers, his struggle to define teacher research, and the questions he left unanswered about the process of teacher research, we can begin to move toward a clear definition of educational action research as we posit answers, based on our experiences in the study and pursuit of action research, to Stenhouse's questions.

Stenhouse and Emancipation through Knowledge

The primary theme in Stenhouse's work was the idea of emancipation—both of students and teachers—through knowledge. Rudduck (1995) explains that as a high school student, Stenhouse became aware of his ability to understand the world around him by considering the knowledge he possessed, exercising his personal judgment, and using various modes of inquiry. This awareness occurred for Stenhouse, Rudduck explains, because he was educated in a system where knowledge and the power associated with knowledge were a right for all rather than a privilege of a few. In this system, Stenhouse was encouraged to use knowledge to make sense of his world so that he could become an authority in his own right. When Stenhouse became a teacher several years later, it quickly became apparent to him that the system he was teaching in was substantially different from the one in which he was educated. The system in which he taught placed teachers in charge of knowledge and thus in a position of power over students (Rudduck). Stenhouse was able to shift this power structure when he began working on the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP), a funded study that supported secondary humanities teachers working with adolescent students.

In his work with teachers on the Humanities Curriculum Project, Stenhouse challenged the traditional roles of authority in the educational system and he attempted to change the power structure in the educational process so that students had more control over their learning. As Stenhouse worked with HCP teachers, his goal was to help them develop in students the ability to understand controversial moral and intellectual issues that occur due to social conditions and human acts (Stenhouse, 1983a). This goal, however, could not be reached using the standard objectives-based curriculum model, which stressed the attainment of pre-established learning outcomes. Stenhouse (1985a) explained his opposition to objectives-based curriculum stating, "Knowledge cannot be reduced to behaviors. In particular it cannot be expressed in terms of pre-specified performances for it is the function of knowledge, as opposed to mere agglomerations of facts, that it does not determine behavior but liberates it" (p. 77). Rudduck (1988; 1995) suggests that for Stenhouse the objectives-based curriculum model signified academic researchers' lack of trust in classroom teachers because it provided a teacher-proof curriculum. Thus, establishing learning outcomes not only stifled students' ability to use judgment and inquiry methods to advance their understanding but it also diminished teachers' ability to use their experience and professional judgment to help students reach that very goal.

Stenhouse and Research

It was in Stenhouse's work with the Humanities Curriculum Project that he first started to question the role of academic research in improving education. Questioning the power relationship that put teachers in a position of authority over students led to a questioning of the power structure that placed academic researchers, who were influencing the ways teachers taught and students learned, in a position of authority over teachers and schools. Stenhouse believed that studying, developing, and experimenting with curricula was the task of teachers, not academic researchers. Rudduck (1988) provides greater insight on Stenhouse's views stating,

> He saw a curriculum development project not as a convenient means of regimenting teachers in a different set of routines, but as a way of extending their individual and communal power. A curriculum project was not a solution worked out by others and offered to teachers, who had merely to apply it; it was a diagnostic and experimental tool, designed to help teachers examine some of the fundamental problems of schooling. In its framework and materials, a curriculum project gave support for trying out and evaluating new approaches in a spirit of inquiry. Teachers, not curriculum packages, are the agents of change, and the function of curriculum projects is to service the professional learning of teachers by offering specifications teachers can evaluate by testing them in their own classrooms. (pp. 31-32)

Working with teachers on the Humanities Curriculum Project revealed to Stenhouse that not only *could* teachers investigate their own practice but they *should* be in charge of studying what does and does not work in the classroom.

Working from this premise, Stenhouse and his colleagues established the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) after their work on the HCP ended. The Centre's purpose was to make teachers part of the educational research community, which Stenhouse believed was imperative if research were to apply to the practice of education. Over several years, CARE became a place where teachers and academic researchers collaborated on projects that focused on teachers' refinement of their teaching practices (Stenhouse, 1983a). It was during his time working with CARE that Stenhouse's writings became increasingly critical of the academic research tradition. During this period, Stenhouse attempted not only to define practitioner research but he also attempted to find its place in both the academic researchers' and practitioners' worlds. Several ideas emerged in Stenhouse's work between 1978 and 1982, as well as in his writings that were published posthumously, including criticism of the academic research tradition, the role of theory in pedagogy, and academic authority in research.

Stenhouse (1979a) criticized the positivist academic research tradition because it was based on the assumption that teaching and curricular strategies could be tested by applying the same quantitative methods that are used in agriculture experiments. One weakness of applying the positivist research tradition to educational settings was the necessity of having a random sample to increase external validity, a condition Stenhouse (1979a; 1981) explained, which was impossible to achieve in educational studies. A second problem associated with positivist research was the notion of control over context. Stenhouse was hesitant to accept results from traditional academic research studies that began with the phrase, "Other things being equal" because he realized that in real educational settings things are never equal (Stenhouse, 1979b, p. 5). Positivistic research was concerned with establishing general laws and theories, but real classroom situations, Stenhouse (1981) asserted, were too complex for general theories to be useful. Stenhouse (1983a) described the problem with generalization stating, "...few such generalizations take account either of the professional biographical development of teacher and student or the crucial contextual and temporal variables. Hence, at this level of action, research can offer only relatively insecure hypotheses, principles, and theories" (p. 212). Stenhouse made it clear that his argument against positivist research methods in education had less to do with random sampling issues and the use of statistical procedures than it did with its lack of application to the practice of education (see Stenhouse, 1985b).

In Stenhouse's view, removing context from educational research made research irrelevant to teachers and thus to educational practice. The theories developed in traditional academic research, Stenhouse (1981) explained, were based on studies that were difficult to replicate or impossible to apply in the classroom. In addition, it seemed to Stenhouse that there was little real desire by traditional academic researchers to see their theories applied and tested in actual classrooms. Academic research, Stenhouse (1985b) suggested, had been made inaccessible to teachers because it was written in a language laden with jargon that only other academic researchers understood (Stenhouse, 1981). A second issue related to the inaccessibility of academic research relates to the notion of authority. Stenhouse (1981) remarked that academic researchers tended to view teachers as theoretically innocent. Stenhouse believed, though, that teachers merely lacked experience with educational theory and thus the confidence to relate theory to their practice.

The notion of authority in educational research and the structure of power in educational research were of utmost importance to Stenhouse. In fact, one of his most radical ideas, based on his concept of teachers' emancipation through knowledge, was that practitioners need not justify themselves or their actions to academic researchers. Instead, the burden was on academic researchers to justify themselves and their work to practitioners (Stenhouse, 1981). Stenhouse clearly saw the disparity of status between teachers and researchers, and he was concerned that it would prevent both parties from pursuing collaborative studies and engaging in discourse about theory and practice (Stenhouse, 1983a). This problem, Stenhouse speculated, was even more serious in the United States than in Britain because he felt that American researchers held themselves in a higher esteem than did British researchers and they held teachers in a lower esteem. In an address to practitioners, Stenhouse (1985c) appealed to teachers to use academic research to supplement and enrich their judgment, stating that teachers—not researchers—were in the position to critically appraise academic research. This appeal was at the heart of Stenhouse's concept of how education could best be served by research: academic researchers provided theory derived in the traditional academic (statistical) method and teachers tested that theory in the real world context of their classrooms. Stenhouse's position was that both researchers and teachers had to be involved in the research process if there were to be any relationship between educational practice and educational theory, maintaining that, "...practitioners [are] in a position to send theorists back to their drawing boards with confidence. That authority should rest with teachers" (Stenhouse, 1983a, p. 214).

Questions, Ambiguities, and Possibilities

As Kemmis (1995) explains, CARE, under Stenhouse's leadership, became well-known as a place where new ideas emerged that were thought of as creative, innovative, unconventional, radical, and even sacrilegious. Kemmis sees Stenhouse as an important transitional figure who, at the time of his death, was on the verge of major breakthroughs in the study of theory, practice, and research in education. Being in this position, however, also meant that Stenhouse left many unanswered questions. For example, Stenhouse

articulated that educational research should be a collaborative effort between academic researchers and teachers, and although he saw their roles clearly delineated—academic researchers provided educational theories and teachers tested those theories in the context of the classroom—Stenhouse had not resolved how the collaboration would work. A major issue centered on the fact that without training and guidance teachers could not understand the language of traditional research, which made it impossible for them to apply theories in practice. Further, although Stenhouse made it clear that the role of teachers was to test academic researchers' theories and send them back to their drawing boards, he had not determined how this might be accomplished. An obvious solution would have been for teachers to disseminate their work through publication, which Stenhouse (1981) acknowledged in "What Counts as Research" but then suggested in the same article that it was sufficient for teachers to share their work with a critical community who could scrutinize the work and offer suggestions for improvements. The ambiguity here is that if teachers are only disseminating the results of their research to those in their critical community, how can the research truly impact educational theory? It is not possible to send academic researchers back to their drawing boards without disseminating the results of practitioner studies in a way comparable to the dissemination of traditional educational research studies.

Another unresolved issue in Stenhouse's work relates to the actual process of practitioner research. Stenhouse (1981) expressed the need for research to be systematic, planned, and self-critical, but he did not suggest ways this could be achieved. An analysis of Stenhouse's writings indicates that he was struggling with ways to define practitioner research and in fact he seemed to have a difficult time even deciding on terminology to use for practitioner research calling it at times illuminative research (Stenhouse, 1979c), case-study research (Stenhouse, 1979a; 1985d; 1985e), teacher research (Stenhouse, 1981, 1983a), and action research (Stenhouse, 1985f). Rudduck (1995) explains that regardless of the terminology used to describe practitioner research, Stenhouse consistently maintained that its goal was the advancement of teachers' professional understanding of their practice. To reach that goal, Stenhouse suggested that teachers use 'descriptive' research methods that focused on the study of cases rather than the study of samples, and he suggested that the two methods that could be used in this pursuit were ethnographic methods based on participant observation and historical methods based on interviews (Stenhouse, 1979b; 1979c). Stenhouse (1979c) also stressed the need for rigor in practitioner research stating, "I want to see that academic standards are maintained in this new paradigm through the development of adequate academic conventions" (p. 6). However, the standards Stenhouse suggested were limited, focusing only on practitioners making their data available to others for verification.

Practitioner research is still referred to in a number of ways— teacher self-study, teacher-as-researcher, and a variety of labels associated with action research (collaborative action research, educational action research, classroom action research, etc.). And though it is not necessary to limit ourselves to one term when referring to practitioner research, it is necessary to define and describe standards for its practice. Standards must go beyond the delineation of limited methods for data collection and the provision that data must be made available for verification, a conclusion Stenhouse would have come to if his work had continued. Theories of educational action research have come a long way in the years since Stenhouse's work with teachers. Many of the standards established in qualitative research methodology, such as collecting multiple forms of data and triangulating data sources to increase validity and credibility, have been applied to action research. Also, there seems to be agreement on the basic cycle of the action research process, which includes reflection to identify a research focus, generating research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and then continuing in the process of ongoing action planning and reflection.

Still, there remains some ambiguity about the role of theory in the action research process, an area where discourse leading to clarity is needed. I, like Stenhouse, believe that a knowledge and understanding of theory are critical when conducting action research studies, and so the teacher researchers I supervise must complete a review of the literature on their topics even before they formulate research questions. Further, whereas Stenhouse suggested that teachers share their research results with a critical community, I encourage teachers to submit their work for publication or presentation because I believe that action research conducted by teachers in the context of real classrooms can substantially contribute to the educational knowledge base. I am discouraged, however, by the trend of many journals to solicit research by teachers but then only publish collaborative research conducted by academic researchers and teachers that is so full of academic jargon that it fails to be useful to most teachers. Research that claims to be action research but contains p-values and t-tests confirms first that there are still many in education who don't know what action research really is, and second that academic researchers are continuing to use jargon to maintain their positions of authority in educational research. I see this as the teacher being brought into the world of the academic researchers "on a temporary ticket" (Rudduck, 1988, p. 36), and this kind of unnatural collaboration does not serve teachers or help them study their teaching in meaningful or sustainable ways.

Of course, it may be that published teacher research doesn't really look like teacher research for a number of reasons. Journal editors may not be receiving enough submissions from teachers, and if this is the case, the burden falls on those of us who facilitate action research studies to help the teachers we work with in the publication process. Another problem may be that the quality of teacher research is so poor that journal editors are reluctant to publish the

studies they receive from teachers. This situation may be exacerbated by the fact that we have yet to establish firm standards for action research. This is an area where academic researchers and teacher researchers need to work together. Keeping in mind what we can take from Stenhouse on teachers' emancipation through knowledge, the responsibility of creating standards should not fall on academic researchers because that means that once again we are placed in a position of authority over teachers. Instead, teachers and academic researchers should work together to establish acceptable standards for action research, focusing perhaps on issues related to validity, credibility, and the role of theory.

The intention of this article was to describe the impact of Lawrence Stenhouse's work on the action research movement. Though Stenhouse's greatest influence occurred in Britain, there is little doubt that its ripples were felt here, too. Many of the action research theorists that have contributed to our practice—Stephen Kemmis, Clem Adelman, Susan Noffke, John Elliot—were influenced by the work of Stenhouse. Great strides have been made in the study and use of action research in education in the years since Stenhouse's death, but one question he asked remains unanswered:

> Could we have an educational science?...could we have a study of educational phenomena which opted neither for the common language of education nor for the language of social science theory, but instead for a theory which related directly to educational practice? Not a sociology, nor a psychology, but a pedagogy? (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 108)

I think that most of us who have been engaged in research with teachers would say that not only is this a possibility, but we are on our way to seeing this happen. Still, teachers and academic researchers must define this educational science and establish its standards focusing on questions such as 1) What is the role of theory in action research? 2) How can the results of studies by teachers be used to inform theory and inform practice? 3) How do we alter the authority structure in educational research so that academic researchers and teacher researchers value and use each other's work? And, of course, there are a number of methodology questions related to the process of action research that could be added to this list. As teachers and academic researchers work together to answer these questions, I hope that we can remember two quotes from the work of Stenhouse. First, "The virtue of humanity is diminished in man when judgement [sic] is overruled by authority" (Stenhouse, 1983b, p. 163). We are best served in our pursuit of a collaborative educational research tradition if we as academic researchers can let go of our ownership and authority in research and share with teachers the responsibility of informing education. This leads to a second important assertion from Stenhouse, "It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the classroom by understanding it" (in Rudduck, 1988, p. 35).

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Discipline Referrals: A Wealth of Information

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Student discipline problems continue to be a great concern for educators today. This study examined the discipline referrals in a small rural elementary school for an entire school year. An attempt was made to determine types, frequency, and dates of student misbehaviors as well as type and frequency of administrator intervention. Also, relationships between discipline problems and student achievement were considered. The results indicated that the vast majority of discipline referrals were filed on a very small number of students. Also, there seemed to be a strong correlation between discipline problems and special education and remedial education students. In addition, almost without exception, the discipline problems were dealt with in a "reactive" manner. Lastly, there was a substantial "upswing" in referrals filed as the school year progressed. Problem areas as well as implications are discussed.

Introduction

I am a school psychologist in an elementary school of approximately 480 students in grades Kindergarten through 6th. Recently, I had an "eye-opening" experience as I walked into the principal's office one afternoon and was struck by how crowded it was. It was not filled with teachers, staff members, or parents. Rather, it was crowded with students.

Two students sat in front of the secretary's desk. Another student sat next to the door marked "Storage" while two other students stood in front of the teachers' mailboxes. Also, I heard a discussion going on inside the principal's office between students and the principal about "good choices" and "consequences for behavior." I didn't have to ask why the students were sent to the office. I knew the answer. They were all sent there for disciplinary reasons.

In this descriptive research study, data regarding student misbehavior, namely written discipline referrals and information from a discipline logbook, were collected and analyzed. The purpose of this study was to develop a precise description of the total number of written discipline referrals, number of students receiving referrals, referral rates per student, and number of referred students who received special education or Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Also, the types and frequency of student misbehaviors and administrative action, as well as the frequency of written referrals by month were described. Lastly, the most frequent locations for behavior problems were determined. It is the hope of this researcher that the results of this study can be shared with teachers and staff to inform them about the "state" of discipline problems within the school. Also, the information may prove useful in developing future professional development opportunities for teachers and staff.

Overview of Relevant Research

School discipline is a major concern for educators, parents and students alike. For too many of us, "a daily, low – level nastiness and disorder turn schools from communities into obstacle courses or even combat zones" (Educational Testing Service, 1998, pg.33). Of course, dealing with the problems and proposing solutions is an ongoing challenge.

One method of dealing with student's misbehavior is the time-honored tradition of sending them to the principal's office. When a student is sent to the principal's office for a disciplinary infraction, the principal must determine the next discipline step for that student. The consequences include, but are not limited to, the principal talking to the student, detention, call to parents and out-of-school suspension. The latter is normally reserved for repeat offenders or serious infractions such as fighting or bringing a weapon to school. Suspension and expulsion appear to be an ineffective way of dealing with this behavior, as they do not appear to be deterrents (Bock, Tapscott, & Sayner, 1998). In most cases, suspension is seen as a "break" or "vacation" from school. Also, there's a strong relationship between failing grades and suspension (Bock, Tapscott, & Savner, 1998), which makes student time out of school via suspension and away from instruction all the more troubling.

Another option to out of school suspension is in-school suspension or ISS (Eggleston, 2001). ISS students remain in school but they are isolated from their classmates in a room to work on their regular assignments. Some forms of ISS have been found to be effective. These programs have a