Action Research in Teacher Education as a Force for Greater Social Justice[1]

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In this chapter I revisit one of the major themes I addressed in the keynote talk that I gave at the 1992 CARN conference in Worcester in the UK. In my 1992 talk, "Personal transformation and social reconstruction through action research"(Zeichner, 1993), I explored the idea of what it means for action research conducted by primary and secondary school teachers to contribute to greater social, cultural, political and economic justice in a society, and I criticized both what I saw as an uncritical glorification of action research because of the alleged personal and social benefits that were often implied to be inevitably associated with doing it, and criticisms of teachers by academics for not directly seeking to change the structures of schooling and focusing their efforts mainly within their classrooms. I argued that while educational action research does not necessarily promote a more humane and just school or society and can (and has been) used to legitimate ideas and practices that are harmful to individuals and societies, that it is possible for teachers to do "socially critical" action research (Tripp, 1990) at multiple levels- in their classrooms, in their schools, and in the society at large.

In this chapter, I discuss initial teacher education and explore the issue of how action research in initial teacher education can serve to support the realization of greater justice in an unjust and often inhumane world. Teacher education is a logical focus for my analysis because this is the sphere in which I work. I also want to focus on teacher education rather than on teaching because of what I see happening to change it in fundamental ways in many countries throughout the world. First, I will discuss what I see going on, and what disturbs me about what I see. Then I will address the question of how I think educational action research can contribute to overcoming some of the obstacles that I identify that have prevented teacher education from contributing to the building of more just and humane societies. I will then share several different kinds of examples of what I see as action research that supports greater social justice.

There are many interesting theoretical debates in the academic literature among advocates of different conceptions of justice (e.g., between advocates of distributional theories and relational theories)[2], but I am not going to get into a philosophical exploration of the different meanings of social justice here.

In several ways, action research has become a central part of teacher education all over the world. Most teacher education programs now require student teachers to conduct action research studies as part of their preparation programs (Grossman, 2005; Price, 2001) and many teacher educators study their own practice through some form of practitioner inquiry as part of the relatively new but rapidly growing self-study movement

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[1] This chapter is a revised version of a keynote address presented at the annual meeting of the Collaborative Action Research Network, Umea University, Sweden.
[2] See McDonald & Zeichner (in press), North (2006, 2008) and Sturman (1997) for a discussion of some of these conceptions and their relationship to one another in an educational context.

in teacher education (e.g., Loughran & Russell, 2002). I will also discuss the need for more teacher educators to engage in participatory action research in collaboration with people in schools and communities.

I am using the term action research in a broad way today to include forms of practitioner inquiry that do not necessarily follow the classic action research spiral. In recent years, a variety of different approaches to practitioner inquiry have been used in teacher education programs including action research, participatory action research, critical practitioner inquiry, critical participatory action research, lesson study, the scholarship of teaching, teacher research and self-study (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). My focus is on all of these various forms of practitioner inquiry. There are examples in each of them of inquiries that have emancipatory goals and accomplishments associated with them.

Teacher Education is under Attack

> No one will have the freedom to seek better teaching and stronger education…
> until the intellectual stranglehold exerted by the teacher education cartel is broken
> (Holland, 2004).

Today teacher education around the world is in trouble. My perception of this situation is highly influenced of course by my location in the land of George Bush and his government's efforts to privatize public education and deprofessionalize the work of teaching (e.g., Baines 2006; Raphael & Tobias, 1997) but I am pretty confident that what I will describe below is true in some form in many countries throughout the world because of the wide influence of the neo-liberal and neo-conservative thinking that is guiding efforts to dismantle public education and teacher education in the U.S. and elsewhere (Carnoy, 1995; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Freeman-Moir & Scott, 2007; Hypolito,   2004).

> A variety of policies are beginning to emerge that seem directed at taking control
> of education away from teachers and teacher educators , and eliminating- under
> efficiency arguments- the very mechanisms that can help teachers to effectively
> increase education quality (the professional character of teaching with all that it
> brings, such as a deeper knowledge of the subjects they will teach. A deeper
> knowledge of how to teach those subjects to an increasingly diverse population,
> critical thinking, cognitive growth, among others (Tatto, 2007).

There are several characteristics of teacher education in many parts of the world today. On the one hand, there have been several major trends occurring in programs that provide the initial education of teachers. These include the commodification of the work of preparing teachers and making teacher preparation subject to market forces, excessively prescriptive accountability requirements from government bodies that seek to control the substance of the teacher education curriculum, consistent and painful cuts in the budgets of public institutions charged with the education of teachers, and attacks on efforts to educate teachers to teach in socially just ways such as preparing them to engage in multicultural or anti-racist education. I will focus my comments on what is happening in the U.S. because that is the situation with which I am most familiar.

Many of these pressures on teacher education are a result of the spread of neo-liberal ideas and policies about markets, privatization, deregulation, and the private vs.

public good from the world of elementary and secondary education- into teacher education (Hinchey & Kaplan, 2005). According to Robertson (2008) these policies have three central aims:

> (1) The redistribution of wealth upward to the ruling elites through new structures of governance, (2) the transformation of educational systems so that the production of workers for the economy is the primary mandate, and (3) the breaking down of education as a public sector monopoly opening it up to strategic investment by for-profit firms (p.12).

What we are seeing in the U.S. is the tremendous growth of alternatives to traditional college and university-based teacher education which include many new for-profit companies that have gone into the business of preparing teachers. These alternatives are actively supported by the federal government (our former secretary of education said in a major report on teacher quality that he thought participation in a teacher education program should be made optional)[3] and by state policies in certain parts of the country that have actively encouraged alternatives to college and university-based teacher education. [4]

The encouragement of alternatives to university hegemony over teacher preparation in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing. What is important to note about the alternatives being encouraged though is that they are closely linked with a technicist view of the role of teachers and with efforts to erode whatever professional autonomy that teachers still have left. A number of scholars from different parts of the world have done a very good job of carefully documenting the transformation of the occupation of teaching worldwide to what has been called "the new professionalism" that accepts the view that decisions about what and how to teach and assess are largely to be made beyond the classroom rather than by teachers themselves (e.g., Furlong, 2005; Robertson, 2000; and Smyth et al. 2000; Tatto, 2007). The same ideas that have resulted in the new professionalism for teaching have now entered the world of teacher education to try and ensure that teachers are prepared to assume their limited roles as educational clerks who are not to exercise their judgment in the classroom (e.g., Johnson et al. 2005).

There is evidence that many of the non college and university programs in the U.S. focus on meeting only the minimum standards set by governmental bodies (e.g., Baines, 2006) and that the goal is to prepare "good enough teachers" [5] to teach children of the poor by obediently following scripted curriculum and instructional practices that are alleged supported by research (to raise standardized test scores), but which in reality line the pockets of friends of the government who own the companies that make the materials.[6] This approach serves to widen the gap between who gets to learn to be

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[3] Paige (2002)

[4] See Zeichner & Hutchinson (in press) for a discussion of the evolution of alternative certification policies in the U.S.

[5] The term was used by a high ranking official in the U.S. Department of Education at a meeting held at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in June 2002.

[6] Two examples of this are the scandal over the Reading First program initiated by a government audit (Grunwald, 2006) and criticisms of the inappropriate use of money in 3 states to buy educational products from a company owned by the president's brother, Neil Bush (Thompson, 2007). There is strong evidence that the so called "Texas miracle" on which current policies emphasizing standardized testing are in part based did not produce the kinds of success for students that were claimed by the Bush administration. (e.g., Haney, 2000; Valenzuela, 2005).

thinkers and authentic problem solvers and those who are forced to learn out of context and interact with knowledge in artificial ways (Kozol, 2005).

These attempts to further deprofessionalize teaching through scripting the curriculum, instructional methods, and standardized tests at every grade level continue to ensure that spots will be available for the teachers produced by the growing number of alternative teacher education programs. In many places, teacher professional development has become "product implementation" aligned with standards and standardized tests and is increasingly conducted by those employed by the testing companies and publishers who produce and sell the materials that are promoted by the government. Money that used to be available in schools for more teacher-initiated and controlled professional development like action research groups and study groups is largely disappearing from American public schools (Randi & Zeichner, 2004) and professional development has shifted from a professional model that focuses on the learning of individual teachers to an institutional model that focuses on getting teachers to conform to institutional mandates (Young, 1998).

What is happening in public schools today has served to drive many good people out of teaching who are not willing to put up with the continued erosion of the dignity of the work of public school teaching that is associated with these changes and actively undermines the goal of improving the quality of learning for all students (Goodnough, 2001; Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers have become easily replaceable technicians in the eyes of many policy makers. The continual openings for the products of the new alternative programs ensure higher profits for the investors in the new teacher education companies. There is a lot of money to be made if teacher education in the U.S. can be privatized.

The solution to the teacher quality problem according to some is to deregulate teacher education and open the gates to individuals who have not completed a teacher education program prior to certification (e.g., Walsh, 2004) rather than to improve the conditions in public schools that are driving teachers out. Andrew Rosen, president of Kaplan College, which is part of one of the major for-profit teacher education companies to enter the U.S. teacher education market in recent years stated the following in an online conversation about teacher education that clearly illustrates this stance:

> Teaching is less lucrative and is rife with work environment issues that many deem not to be worthy of investment… by reducing the barriers for bright-minded professionals, we can increase the population of qualified candidates. (Rosen, 2003).

Most of these new alternative programs use a "learn while you earn" model where the teacher candidates are fully responsible for a classroom (usually of poor children of color) while they are completing their minimalist program.[7] The standards to get into these programs are often very low, sometimes only requiring "a heartbeat and a check that clears the bank." (Baines, 2006, p. 327). The Education Trust, has closely monitored the achievement test scores and other educational opportunities made available to various groups of learners in public schools. They have consistently found that if you are poor and particularly if you are poor and a student of color (i.e., African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American) you are many more times likely in many areas of the

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[7] Feistritzer & Haar (2008) report that in 2006, approximately 50,000 individuals were teachers of record in schools across the country while they were still in the process of completing their pre-service teacher education programs.

country to be taught by inexperienced teachers, teachers who have not completed a full-scale teacher education program, or teachers teaching outside of the fields in which they were prepared (Peske & Haycock, 2006; Also see Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Although most teachers going into teaching still enter teaching through traditional college and university programs (Spellings, 2006), in some parts of the U.S. (Texas and CA for example) nearly as many teachers now enter through an alternative route which is often one of the "fast track" programs that provide minimal preparation to teach (Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). An extreme form of a fast track program, the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence, a private group supported by the Bush administration with non competitive awards totally $40 million dollars so far, certifies teachers in 7 states who pass two paper and pencil tests without having to complete any teacher education program, traditional or alternative.

A second aspect of current developments in U.S. teacher education is the continuing cuts in state government financial support for public universities where the majority of teachers in the U.S. are still prepared. As the states have had to address increased healthcare costs for the elderly, the building of prisons to house the minorities and other poor people whom the public schools have failed to educate, and to make up for the shortfalls in federal support for various programs in public elementary and secondary schools that the states are obligated by law to provide (for example programs for special education students),[8] they have reduced funding to public universities (Lyall & Sell, 2006).[9] As the demands on university teacher educators have increased with expanding accountability requirements, their resources have gone down.

For example, in my own state of Wisconsin, state appropriations to the University of Wisconsin system's 13 campuses adjusted for inflation decreased by 22% or $223 million dollars between 2000 and 2007 the public contribution to my so called public university in Madison is down to approximately 19 percent of the total budget currently (Clark, 2007). The rest of the money needed to run the university has to come from research grants, private gifts and student tuition. There is hardly any difference anymore between a public and private university in the U.S. This pressure to reduce the size of teacher education in universities by starving the education schools that prepare teachers serves to support the growth of alternative programs and the corporatization of teacher education.

A third aspect of current developments in U.S. teacher education are the increased and often excessive accountability demands that are placed on teacher education programs by state governments and national accrediting bodies. In just about every state, teacher education graduates are required to pass a series of standardized tests to enter and complete their programs and to demonstrate mastery of a set of detailed teaching and subject matter standards. Teacher educators are required in submitting their programs to states or to a national accrediting body for approval to spend inordinate amounts of time preparing detailed assessment plans showing how each course in their programs is

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[8] For example, between 2002 and 2006, Title I funding was under funded by $31.5 billion dollars and IDEA was under funded by $ 37.6 billion dollars. Retrieved from the National School Board Association website on September 8, 2006. (www.nsba.org/site/docs/38600/38542.pdf.

[9] Feistritzer & Haar (2008) state that as many as one half of teachers certified through alternative routes in 2005 were in just 3 states-Texas, California and New Jersey.

aligned with state standards, and with detailed performance indicators showing exactly what tasks student teachers are required to do to meet the standards.

As the associate dean for teacher education at my university, I spent 3 months last year essentially fulltime preparing the reports to our state education department on our teacher education programs so that the state could review our programs for their compliance with state certification laws. While some forms of accountability for teacher education institutions are reasonable and necessary, in a growing number of states, current demands for teacher educators to rationalize their programs have gone beyond the realm of reasonableness and are beginning to interfere with teacher educators being able to accomplish their goals.

For example, recent studies in Maryland and California have shown that while teacher educators in some situations have been able to meet the increasingly prescriptive program approval requirements while still maintaining intellectual control over their programs (Kornfeld et al. 2007; Rennert-Ariev, 2008), precious resources were spent though in both of these cases on meeting requirements that teacher educators felt did not enhance the quality of their programs. These resources could have been used for other things that would contribute to improving program quality like strengthening school-university partnerships. Rennert-Ariev (2008) who conducted the study in Maryland, found the practice of what he called "bureaucratic ventriloquism" where "superficial demonstrations of compliance with external mandates became more important than authentic intellectual engagement." (p.8).

A whole new industry in electronic portfolios has emerged with these requirements, where a few companies (e.g., Live Text, Chalk & Wire) aggressively market portfolio systems to colleges and universities so that they can provide the necessary data to gain approval for their programs. These portfolio systems have emphasized the bureaucratic aspects of keeping track of student teachers' performance on standards and for the most part have failed to take advantage of the potential in portfolios to deepen teacher learning (Ayala, 2006; Bullough, 2008). Several of the portfolio companies and the two companies that make most of the tests used nationally (ETS and NES) have come to sponsor the annual meetings of the major national teacher education association in the U.S.- The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). When people walked into the opening session of the AACTE conference in NYC last February what they first saw were two giant screens with the logo of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) the maker of most of the tests used in U.S. teacher education programs.

One extreme form of accountability expectations referred to as the "positive impact mandate" is being seriously pushed by policy makers in a number of areas in the country and there are predictions by some that the so called "results-based" teacher education that will come from using the positive impact mandate will become the norm in the country in a few years. With this requirement, teacher education institutions will be evaluated and ranked based on the standardized test score results of the pupils taught by the graduates of the teacher education programs. This is analogous to evaluating and approving medical schools on the basis of how many of the patients of their graduates are helped by their medical care or get sicker. There are several reasons why the positive impact mandate is a bad idea even if one accepts the ability of value added assessment to link pupil performance with individual teachers in a way that rules out other explanations

for student test performance: (a) No other professional school is held accountable for the performance of its graduates after they have left the preparation program, (b) Even if one accepts the ability of value added assessment to link student test performance with individual teachers in a manner that rules out other explanations of student test score differences, the costs involved in implemented this kind of assessment would divert enormous resources away from other teacher education activities that arguably would do a lot more to improve the quality of teacher preparation programs (Zeichner, 2005).

Recently the lead story in our national education newspaper *Education Week* praised the state of LA for implementing this system for its teacher education programs (Honawar, 2007). If you are familiar with the U.S. school system, you would know that LA spends probably close to the least amount of money on education, healthcare and other social service systems in the country. Under the logic of the current government though, the states that most support its policies (Texas, LA, and Misssissippi) are ranked higher in educational quality reports because of their compliance rather than because of the actual quality of their education systems. The states with the highest overall educational quality are usually the ones least supportive of the accountability mandates.

All of this together- the requirements for extremely detailed information about institutional assessment systems, testing, and so on have been forcing teacher educators to spend time on things that they do not believe will help them do their jobs better just to appear that they are doing what is expected to get approval for their programs. This is time and money that could alternatively be spent on actually improving their programs. Lots of time and money is currently being spent on things in U.S. teacher education institutions that have no relation to improving program quality (Johnson et al. 2005).

A final element of teacher education in the U.S. currently is the attacks stemming from neo-conservative views about the proper content for a teacher's education. These attacks have focused on the increased emphasis on multicultural education in American teacher education programs and on preparing teachers who can contribute to eliminating the achievement gaps between students from different racial, ethnic and social class backgrounds that not only have persisted in elementary and secondary schools but which have grown larger under current government policies. These attacks equate a focus on social justice and multiculturalism with a lowering of academic standards and blame university teacher educators and teachers for the continued problems in educating public school students who are increasingly poor and of color. These attacks on multicultural education divert attention from the real influences on the problems in public schools - a variety of factors including the under funding of public education, the lack of access to affordable housing, transportation, healthcare and jobs that pay decent wages.

One example of the criticism of social justice and multicultural education efforts by external groups as a successful effort in 2006 to force the major National accrediting Body in Teacher Education in the U.S. (The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education(to drop the term social justice from its accrediting standards for teacher education programs (Wasley, 2006).

A second aspect of the critique of Ed Schools involves the construction of an oversimplified distinction between teacher-centered and learner-centered instruction and the creation of a caricature of teacher educators as advocates of an unrestrained form of learner-centered instruction. For example, in a report on teacher education in California done by the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, Izumi & Coburn (2001) quote

Florida State University psychologist K. Anders Ericksson who describes college and university teacher educators as "radical constructivists" who act in extreme ways that few teacher educators would actually support.

> Radical constructivists recommend educational settings where students are forced to take the initiative and guide their own learning. Many radical constructivists even discourage the teacher from correcting students when their reasoning and ideas are invalid because such criticism may jeopardize their self-confidence in their independent reasoning and challenge their self-respect (p. 9).

Every Program is a Social Justice Program

While all of these forces are operating on teacher education from the outside (cuts in resources, privatization, increased accountability, and attacks on multiculturalism), inside college and university teacher education programs, teacher educators everywhere are claiming to have programs that prepare teachers to teach for social justice, to provide everyone's children with a high quality education, and to work against the forces that are leading to increased inequality and suffering in the world today. Social justice teacher education has become a slogan like reflective teaching was in the 80s and 90s and it is hard to find a teacher education program in the U.S. that does not claim to have social justice as a central part of its mission in preparing teachers. Action research appears frequently these days in the teacher education literature as a social practice used in socially just teacher education programs. It is often implicitly assumed that having student teachers do action research or teacher educators studying their own practice will necessarily be a force for promoting greater social justice.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will address the issue of what it means to do action research in a way that acts as a force for greater social justice? While I will give examples of action research by individual student teachers and teacher educators within their own classrooms and think that this work is a necessary an important part of social justice teacher education, I also want to stress the importance of going beyond individual studies toward action research as a more social or collective process in public spaces, similar to Stephen Kemmis's emphasis in his recent writing on what he calls "critical participatory action research." (Kemmis in press). I also want to suggest that action research in teacher education that promotes greater social justice has to be extended outside the academy to involve people in schools and communities who are also working for greater social justice. I will argue that at least some of the action research that needs to be done in today's hostile environment for teacher education and public education in general, needs to be connected to broader social movements for social justice in a way that has not been typical.

Action Research in Teacher Education

There are several different types of action research that exist in teacher education programs. These include both forms of self-study by teacher educators and the use of action research as a requirement or option for student teachers. Rather than critiquing examples that I don't think support greater equity and justice, I will focus on a few that I think do. I will discuss teacher educators' self-studies first.

Self-Study Research of Teacher Educators

Self-study research by teacher educators has grown tremendously in the last decade in many parts of the world. Just in the last few years, we have seen the publication of a 1,500 page handbook (Loughran et al. 2004), numerous book collections of self-studies, and a journal *Studying Teacher Education*. Although as Mo Griffiths and several colleagues recently pointed out, the possibilities are rich for self-study to address issues of equity and justice (Griffiths et al. 2004), many if not most teacher educator self study projects published so far have not explicitly focused on these issues. Although they have played a positive and important role in the professional development of teacher educators and have led to a greater sense of community among teacher educators, to improved teaching in many teacher education classrooms, and have led sometimes to promotion and tenure, for the most part they have not directly and publicly challenged the toxic environment that I described earlier.

Working on Their own Practice

One type of self-study by teacher educators has involved teacher educators in trying to better understand and improve their efforts to transform the attitudes, beliefs and practices of their pre-service teacher students with regard to issues of race, gender, social class, sexual preference and other aspects of difference where the lack of justice prevails. This research has included efforts to develop a greater correspondence between one's professed beliefs as an educator working for social justice and one's practices, which sometimes are inconsistent with one's expressed beliefs, or efforts to attempt to better understand student teacher resistance to the intended emancipatory action of teacher educators (See Schulte, 2004).

Laurie MacGillivray's (1997) study of her basic reading and study skills class for pre-service teachers at the University of Southern California is an example of this kind of research. Laurie, a white teacher educator (who describes her orientation as critical feminist), carefully studied her own life history and documented her interactions with several specific students in her class in great detail. This documentation led to the surfacing of several stark examples of where her practice conflicted with her professed orientation- in her words where "I ended up reinforcing much of what I had attempted to disrupt" "(where) my unacknowledged biases and expectations sabotaged my conscious attempts to change the traditional power structures in classrooms." Laurie's reflections on her data led to efforts to confront these contradictions by a careful analysis of her motives and actions and a redirection of her teaching to include attention to ways of knowing that she had previously ignored. At the end of her study, we are left with a sense of the tremendous complexity of libratory pedagogy in teacher education but also with a sense of new insights and accomplishment.

Teacher Educators Working on Themselves

A related but broader type of self-study research in teacher education that goes beyond an examination of practices or the connection between practices and professed beliefs is when teacher educators work on transforming their own attitudes and beliefs with regard to difference. On example of this kind of self-study is the research by Ann Schulte now a teacher educator in CA on her practice as a teacher educator when she was a graduate student at my university (Schulte, 2001). Through participation in an action research group with other graduate student teacher educators, graduate courses in her doctoral

program, and a careful analysis of her journal that she kept throughout her years of teaching courses and supervising student teachers in the field, Ann developed a growing awareness of the ways in which her own privilege from being a white, middle class, heterosexual, English speaking woman and her unconscious biases and prejudices connected to her social locations influenced her teaching of teachers and children. Through this analysis, she developed a greater commitment to and skills in preparing her student teachers to interrogate their own privileges and unexamined biases and to examine how these impact their teaching. Ann engages in self-study to better understand how to engage her students, who have backgrounds similar to her own and represent the majority of people going into teaching in the U.S., in a process of personal transformation. Knowing how she transforms her own thinking, helps her more effectively support her students' transformation. Ann's study documents both her own transformation and that of her students, and underlines the importance in social justice oriented work in teacher education of teacher educators' growth and development.

Examining the Structures in Which Teacher Educators Work

Another type of self-study in teacher education that I think serves to promote greater social justice is when the researchers begin to critically examine the institutional and policy structures within which they work. A recently published study by teacher educators at Sonoma State University in CA (Kornfeld, et.al. 2007) is an example of this kind of self-study. In this study, 4 teacher educators examined their experience in going through the program approval process by the state education department where there were detailed requirements for presenting the state with documentation of how all of the various courses in their programs helped students meet 128 elements within the teaching standards prescribed by the state. This study documents the ways in which the new discourses imposed on teacher education institutions in CA and an unprecedented level of prescriptiveness from the state, affected teacher educators individually and as a community and influenced their ability to maintain the critical stance of their teacher education programs. In the end, what we see in this research is an example of teacher educators subtlety subverting the system rather than one of outright rebellion. While faculty had to spend many hours producing documentation that they did not, for the most part, believe to be helpful to them or a fair assessment of their work, overall they managed to maintain the critical orientation of their programs while succeeding in gaining state approval. While the oppressive system for monitoring teacher education still exists, the publication of this study has enabled other teacher educators with critical orientations to see how to maintain the direction of their work under the face of external pressures toward technocratic rationality.

Student Teachers Doing Action Research

In addition to teacher educators studying themselves, there has been a great deal of work over the years with teacher educators involving student teachers in doing action research as part of their teacher education program. As I asserted earlier, I think most initial teacher education programs throughout the world today engage student teachers in some form of action research. I have written before criticizing some of what I see as narrow and technical forms of action research prevalent in U.S. teacher education and

professional development programs (e.g., Zeichner, 1993), but today I want to focus on twopositive rather than negative examples.

The first example of student teacher action research that I want to present that I think illustrates how student teacher action research can be a contribution toward greater social justice is a study done by a Namibian student teacher, Veronica Liswani. (Liswani, 1999). Veronica who was a student at the Caprivi College of Education in a secondary school in northeastern Namibia in the late 1990s conducted a study in one of her 9th year agricultural science classes that sought to investigate the lack of participation in the class by the 6 female students.[10] Through a series of interviews with her students, observations of their work in other classes in the school, and a survey of the other teachers in her school, Veronica sought to better understand why the girls did not participate in her class. Based on an analysis of these data, she modified her practice over a 3-week period through such things as changing her questioning strategies and providing more opportunities for more mixed gender small group work. Her actions over this period of time led to increased involvement of the 6 girls in the science class. It would be easy to dismiss this study as inconsequential because it was done by a student teacher who was not fully responsible for her classroom and because the intervention was within the boundaries of her classroom. We also do not know if what Veronica did during this one term altered the life trajectory of her students in any lasting way. This reaction though would be a mistake if you understand the context in which the research was done.

Lars Dalhstom, John Nyambe, Chuma Mayumbelo and several others have written about the use of critical practitioner inquiry (CPI) in Namibian teacher education programs (e.g., Dahlstrom, 2006; Mayumbelo & Nyambe, 1999). CPI which was introduced right after independence from South Africa aimed at shifting the preferential right of interpretation over educational practice from academics mostly in the so called "north" to educational practitioners within Namibia. CPI in Namibia is contextualized at 3 different levels when it is introduced to teacher educators and student teachers- a scholastic level which examines education from a global perspective, a level where policy documents within Namibia are critically examined, and a level where the historical legacy of educational practices are unpacked. Doing action research to promote greater gender equity in one's classroom is important in any context, but especially in one with the historical legacy of colonialism and apartheid like Namibia.

Also, through CPI student teachers, teachers, and teacher educators are producing studies like this one which are then used as readings in teacher education courses. This alters the political economy of knowledge production in significant ways. Instead of only being the receivers of knowledge from academics in the north, Namibians educators have begun to develop their own indigenous research traditions.

The second example of action research done by student teachers that I think is an example of socially just action research is actually a combination of a self-study by a teacher educator and her student teachers' participatory action research projects. I want to share this work written about by Alice McIntyre (2003) a teacher educator in Massachusetts because it is an example of action research that takes student teachers out into the communities in which their students live. McIntyre chose participatory action

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[10] I worked as a consultant with the Namibian National Institute for Educational Development from 1994-2000 and became familiar with action research studies being done by student teachers in Namibian education colleges.

research as the frame for this project because of its explicit focus on "social change within communities of struggle and conflict." (p. 29). Her goal was to help her student teachers become more culturally competent and able to work successfully in urban schools and to become more committed to being personally engaged in social change to help create the social preconditions needed for successful public school systems.

The focus of this research was the collaboration of 11 prospective teachers and 4 other graduate students (13 of whom identified as white) with 24 Black and Latino students who attended the same Boston area school. In the process of collaborating with the students on a participatory action research project that focused on how to get the substantial amount of trash in their neighborhood cleaned up, the prospective teachers gained new insights into the lived experiences of urban youth, a deeper understanding of the community, and of how urban poverty, racism and the lack of resources for families and communities mediate students' education in pubic schools. They also uncovered and reexamined some of their own prejudices and biases about urban communities and their people and began to more clearly see how their own privileges and biases "may have prevented them from engaging in teaching-learning experiences with students living in low income communities." (p.33).

Conclusion

Now that I have presented a variety of examples of specific studies, I want to return to the question of what does it mean to do action research that supports the realization of a world in which there is greater justice in the kind of hostile environment for public education that I described earlier? Clearly, one part of this answer for me is that there are a variety of kinds of action research that make a contribution. The studies of individual teacher educators and student teachers which are initiated with, or develop along the way, explicit goals centered on promoting greater justice are important, even though they often don't directly go beyond the classrooms of the action researchers. Many of these studies are connected though to a community of other action researchers who interact with and challenge and inform the work of individual action researchers.

A second kind of action research that is needed in the struggle for a better world is action research by teacher educators that directly challenges the ideas and structures that are forced on teacher education by the advocates of the neoconservative and neo-liberal agendas for schools and societies. Attempts by teacher educators to subvert through their action research, the mindless and narrowly conceived efforts of policy makers such as was the case with the Sonoma State CA researchers are important because just working within the boundaries of our classrooms although important, is not enough.

Today, in the U.S., I see too few efforts like these to challenge the way in which the issues have been framed by policy makers. Too many teacher educators, including those who say they have social justice oriented programs are accepting the economic and technical rationality that prevails without working to open up a dialogue to reframe the debates, and are working to give the policy makers the data that they demand.

Studies like the example that I discussed from Boston where action research transcends the academy and involves students and their communities is a direction that needs to a part of action research in teacher education during these dangerous times. Because the attacks on teacher education are really just one part of a larger assault on public education and democracy itself, a participatory action research model is needed

where teacher educators collaborate with public school educators K-12 and with parents and community members to do research which contributes to the protection of the civil liberties and institutions which are central to democratic and just societies.

There are many opportunities for teacher educators to join with their elementary and secondary school colleagues and with parents, students and community members in doing participatory action research that works against the neo-liberal and neo-conservative onslaught on public education and democracies. For example, recently in my city, educators, students and community members presented the school district with carefully prepared data and arguments against the school board policy of allowing current efforts by the military to recruit students in Madison schools into the army. The federal education law NCLB requires school districts to give military recruiters student contact information and the penalty is a loss of all federal funding to the school district if it does not comply. The protests focused this week on the display of military recruiting signs in the gymnasiums and stadiums where high school sporting events are held. This is not required by the law. The large signs say "Are you army ready?" and list a phone number to call to sign up. The school district which is in debt every year in large part because of the failure of the federal government to provide the money that it is supposed to provide to carry out federal education mandates received $17,000 from the military for allowing them to display the signs. Thus far, the school district has not agreed to take down the signs, but the discussion continues.

Another example of where teacher educators, elementary and secondary school educators, students and community members have come together within a participatory action research framework is to challenge the de funding of public education. We have recently seen an uplifting example in British Colombia, Canada of successful efforts to challenge the reduction of resources for public schools and teachers through careful documentation by students, parents and educators of the impact of cuts in public school budgets. As a result of these efforts, the government restored the money to the schools that it had cut (BCTF, n.d.).

These broader efforts of participatory action research where teacher educators join with students, teachers and citizens to defend the integrity of public schooling and teachers' work (as well as joining other efforts to provide access to affordable housing, transportation, jobs, and so on) are intimately connected to the future of teacher education. Attempts to defend college and university teacher education that are isolated from broader struggles for social justice in schooling and the society will be seen as self-serving (we academics do live relatively privileged lives) and will fail. The real struggle is over the future of the public vs. private good in the U. S. and many other countries and over the survival of democratic societies.

A strong and well supported system of public education and teacher education are essential to the realization of a society where everyone has access to what is needed to live a life with dignity. Benjamin Barber (1997), a prominent political theorist and scholar of democracy, has argued in response to the attacks on public education in the U.S.

> In attacking…public education, critics are attacking the very foundation of our democratic civic culture. Public schools are not merely schools for the public, but schools of publicness: institutions where we learn what it means to be a public and start down the road toward common national and civic identity. They are the

forges of our citizenship and the bedrock of our democracy… Vilifying public
school teachers and administrators and cutting public school budgets even as we
subsidize private educational opportunity puts us in double jeopardy: for as we
put our children at risk, we undermine our common future, at the same moment in
constraining the conditions of liberty for some, we undermine the future of
democracy for all (p.22).

Action research by teacher educators and student teachers can play an important role in
the struggles to provide access to a life with dignity for everyone's children, but it doesn't
necessarily do so. It is urgent that we work to better link our efforts to implement teacher
education for social justice and within these, our efforts in using action research, with the
struggles of those in other spheres of society who share our hopes for building a more just
and humane world.

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