Book Reviews/Recensions

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, POLICYMAKING, AND PRACTICE

Martyn Hammersley (2001). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd., 180 pages.

One of the perennial questions in the philosophy of natural and social sciences is the significance of research. What does it mean to discover or record a phenomenon? How does analysis of that phenomenon have meaning for practice? If Chris in Edmonton learns French effectively in an immersion program, should all language learners be taught that way? The importance of these questions, however, goes beyond philosophy. At the moment, throughout the English-speaking world, practitioners are encouraged to become more reflective and to conduct mini-action research projects in the classroom. Researchers are under considerable pressure to produce results that can be applied directly to practice, in particular quantitative findings from "scientific" research models. Qualitative researchers continue to struggle with finding ways to extend their analyses beyond the context in which the data is generated. Governments are pushing for one use of research, practitioners another. With *Educational Research, Policymaking, and Practice*, Martyn Hammersley steps into the middle of this fray.

This book has two goals. First, it compiles Hammersley's responses to research conducted by Cambridge Professor of Education and Her Majesty's former Inspector of Schools, David Hargreaves. Hargreaves has consistently argued that research should be at the service of teachers and administrators, including central government. In response, Hammersley has consistently argued that such an idea is philosophically flawed and pragmatically unworkable and has over time worked out an alternative view of the research-practice relationship. The second goal of the book is to present this schema in a reasonably detailed fashion which reflects the evolution of the concepts involved.

Hammersley argues that there are two major views of the relationship between practice and research. The "one world" view holds that research and practice operate to a large extent within the same cultural and policy context and inform each other. One version of this view is Hargreaves' idea that research should be embedded within the pragmatics of practice. Interestingly,

Hammersley argues that critical research is very similar to instrumental views of research in that they both assume that research can show practitioners a better way to practice.

The "two world" view begins with the premise that research and practice are two distinct areas of endeavour. Rather than holding a pragmatic "engineering" view of application, the two world's theory sees research as a way of providing enlightenment for practice. This enlightenment can be weaker or stronger depending, among other things, on the reason for undertaking the research in the first place. Hammersley also argues that "from this perspective, it is not just that research and practice *are* two worlds, but also that they are *inevitably* so; and that they are necessarily in conflict to some degree" (p. 61).

The two world view, even in the simplified version I present here, clearly creates problems for those who believe research should be more responsive to immediate issues of practice. There is no way to bring the two worlds together because their context, demands, and purposes are inherently different. In later chapters, Hammersley goes beyond this rather bleak view when he more fully theorizes the practice-research relationship. He finally comes to the conclusion that the role of research is to provide cognitive resources for practitioners. Practitioners remain responsible for their pedagogic conduct, unlike within the one world view, and researchers remain responsible for the creation of a bank of insights for practitioners to draw upon.

Hammersley's view contradicts recent trends in research to a large degree. In the US, for example, the legislation funding adult education and literacy requires research to deal with issues of practice and classroom practices to be "evidence-based." Similar requirements are becoming commonplace. Hammersley provides an alternative view, but it may not be sufficiently well developed to resist current pressures for the instrumentalization of research. One weakness of the book is its slightly unfinished feel due to its creation from a number of articles and presentations. The balancing strength, however, is the opportunity to see concepts evolving throughout the book.

Why should adult educators be interested in these abstract discussions, which are surely the preserve of theorists? A probable response could focus on a number of pragmatic implications contained within these abstract discussions. As well, it is best to be informed about the ideas lying behind them so that we can justify any possible responses. One very clear example

of this is the possibility of the adoption of an evidence-based curriculum for adult literacy in Canada, which is consistent with recent legislation calling for National literacy standards (Bill C-363) and with the publication of a broad based position paper on building a pan-Canadian literacy strategy (published by the Movement for Canadian Literacy). An evidence-based curriculum is dependent upon the "one world" thesis and the underlying assumption that researchers should shape practice. Another example is that funding may be tied to a program's research agenda; only those adult education providers involved in testing best practices will be fully funded. These suggestions are not unrealistic, and very similar initiatives have already taken place in the US and other settings.

Hammersley's book is timely and thought provoking. It encourages researchers and practitioners to reflect on the value and utility of their work and to be cautious about accepting simplistic solutions to perceived "gaps." I recommend it as worthwhile reading for researchers and those who are interested in the development of education as a field of inquiry. While not conclusively answering the perennial question of research and practice, Hammersley's book provides a vital clarification of the issues involved.

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A SENSE OF THEMSELVES: ELIZABETH MURRAY'S LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Carol Harris (1998). Halifax: Fernwood Publishers, 192 pages.

It has been said that biographers often identify closely with their subjects. Carol Harris, a professor of educational leadership studies at the University of Victoria, is no exception. As a young woman with musical gifts, Harris was captivated by Elizabeth ("Betty") Murray, a modern day pied piper from rural Nova Scotia. Murray used music to bring a community together and foster individual self-development. Indeed, Harris is at her most impassioned and lyrical when describing her participation in Betty Murray's rural choirs. Touched by Betty's magic, young women like Harris sang their hearts out on trips to Halifax, experienced the drama of performance and the romance of exuberant youthful singing on rooftops, the snow falling softly round about. Many of these youth went on to play significant leadership roles