Hunter McEwan

When planning for the EdD got underway in 2009, the planning committee members were in agreement that the program should be significantly different from the PhD. At the time, there was quite a lot of negative talk around the College that the committee was conspiring to produce a “PhD-lite”—a sort of watered down version of the PhD stripped of some of some of the more hard-nosed courses like statistics (the *pons asinorum* of the PhD), and with an easy-option dissertation involving a small practitioner-style project rather than a “real” research study. But we were not in the least interested in taking this easy route. Our aim was not to produce a lesser program but to create one that was qualitatively different.

In what way could the EdD be a different program? The committee were quite taken by Gordon Kirk’s epigram to the effect that the PhD was about understanding the world, whilst the EdD was about changing the world, with is echoes of the Marx/Engels thesis that "philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." However, in spite of the grandiose, revolutionary appeal of Kirk’s epigram, we reined in our radical aspirations and agreed on the more modest, Popperian program of incremental change: one designed to engage local interests and needs. So, the EdD would be aimed at bringing about changes in practice in settings familiar to the students. This would have the added benefit of providing a service to the local schools.

In spite of the general appeal of Kirk’s epigram, one of its less appealing features, to me at least, is that it preserves the distinction between knower and doer, researcher and practitioner that we were keen to avoid as we proceeded with our plans. But more on this, later.

Another factor that was foremost in our minds was that we didn't want to end up with a program that perpetuated one of the major problems afflicting the PhD—namely, the difficulty that some students face in completing the degree and others in finishing it in a reasonable amount of time. Lee Shulman's Carnegie Project on Doctoral Education had flagged a number of problematic areas related to the PhD in Education, and principal among these was that many people who entered on doctoral work didn't plan on doing so with the aim of advancing to a university position. Many are teachers, educators, and school administrators who are looking for an advanced degree that has a practical bearing on their work. Shulman recommended that instead of a single, research-focused doctorate, colleges of education should offer two professional doctorates—one for those who aimed to become university faculty engaged in different research specializations and one for practitioners.

Another hang up of education PhD programs is that students often cruise through the coursework portion of the degree and then hit a wall when they start on the dissertation. This is not just a problem with the students; it's a structural problem built into the PhD. In discussions with more traditionally oriented colleagues, I took delight in disparaging the rudimentary design of the PhD, by referring to it as just a bunch of courses with a dissertation tacked on at the end. First, students take course work to learn about research and then, having absorbed all this knowledge, they get to translate it into action by formulating a research question which they then have to follow through with a properly sequenced research project. There are several problems with this step-by-step approach. The first is that taking coursework about research isn't necessarily an adequate preparation for doing research, and students frequently encounter difficulties in coming up with a researchable problem. If they don't have a good idea of what to

do, they are routinely advised to start with a search of the literature, as if that's where educational problems are to be found rather than in the world. Another problem is with how the dissertation phase is set up with students. If they are in luck, they will be paired with a major advisor with similar interests to the student, and who can offer guidance. Often there is very little compatibility, and students spend valuable time wandering like lost souls, searching for someone who might fit. The contrast with the sciences makes this clearer. Typically, the PhD candidate in the sciences is admitted into a sort of apprenticeship with a team of researchers in an ongoing project, out of which their own dissertation naturally evolves. Not so with the doctoral candidate in education who is often counseled to come up with their own research question and then to proceed by following a sequence of five distinct steps or research project phases.[1] This formulaic, step-by-step approach is taught as if it were indisputable—the only right way to conduct research. It may work in some situations, but it is especially unsuitable as a way of engaging in and representing problems that arise and are pursued in practical settings. Based on the Carnegie recommendations to find another way, we aimed at taking a critical look at these old formulas and routines and seeks alternatives routes to the EdD. First of all, we wanted a program that could be completed in three years. Secondly, we wanted to engage students in inquiry projects from the very start. Students would also work in collaborative situations, and faculty would be assigned as advisors who would work with their advisees from start to finish.

[1] The five step approach is nothing more than a heuristic device derived from classical rhetoric (The Rhetorica ad Herennium attributed to Cicero). It is useful for some requirements but not necessarily in all. Nevertheless, for some it has acquired a sort of special status as an intrinsic part of the structure of doing scientific research as opposed to just one way of writing a research paper.

One way to sum up the PhD structure is to point out that it makes makes an artificial division between learning *that* and learning *how*. Student have to gain a command of the subject matter first and then they get to apply what they have learned by putting this knowledge to work. One implication of this is that the student is regarded as a novice who needs to acquire a degree of content knowledge before they advance to the research phase. We didn't want to think of our students in this way, mainly because they were already experienced educators with a considerable knowledge of systems, institutional settings, and educational problems. They also possessed valuable knowledge of the contexts within educational problems tend to play out. We though it was better to start by building on the know-how that they came to the program with, and then build on this by adding content that would be useful to their development as informed practitioners.

In contrast to the PhD, we started off the program with a major inquiry project. We had been looking at the idea of a consultancy project that some universities had been experimenting with as an alternative to the dissertation. The consultancy project appealed because it was a team project; but we were less impressed by its value as a final project—a substitute for the dissertation. We felt that it had more potential as a project to launch the students on their journey as practical problem solvers. This would not replace the final practitioner research project, but act as an introduction to it. In effect, the EdD would be structured around two large inquiry projects, one at the beginning and one at the end—the heavy weights on each side of the EdD barbell.

Another way we sought to make the EdD different from the PhD was to make it a group endeavor by admitting students in cohorts and organizing them in inquiry teams. The PhD

dissertation process is often a solitary affair involving little interaction with other students and only occasional meetings with faculty, when they are free to consult during appointed office hours. The idea of a cohort in which the students would progress through the different phases of the program was, we felt, essential to avoiding the companionless toil frequently encountered by PhD candidates. As an added benefit, we found that partnerships and groupings did evolve in the program and that these alliances were important motivational influences. Students would organize themselves into voluntary groups to offer feedback and encouragement to each other and, we felt, this group interaction would be instrumental in advancing program success.

As we continued to develop the program, I think that we were also subtly rethinking the role of the faculty. The PhD involves a committee of (usually) five members, all of whom are members of the university graduate faculty. We were required by graduate division rules to have a graduate faculty member as the main advisor of each students; but given the practical nature of the program, we also felt it important to bring in a broader range of expertise particularly in the guidance of the two program inquiry projects—the consultancy project and the final assignment which came to be known as the "dissertation in practice." We referred to this group of faculty as program mentors. We had a ready-made group to take on the role as several highly experienced educators from the public and private schools were active members of the planning committee, and as mentors they added hugely to the advising of students, particularly in acting as gatekeepers, facilitating access to the schools to smooth the way for students to conduct their projects, and advising them in some of the more practical aspects of the projects. Their experience and knowledge contributed importantly to shaping the practitioner aspects of the projects.

The EdD did demand some changes to the way university faculty normally work with students. These, I feel, arose because of the ways we were challenging some of the structural elements of university life. Faculty tend to view their academic lives as a series of semesters lived out in a succession of bits, each bit composed of teaching load, research, and service duties. Teaching loads, in particular, vary by semester. Each affected by access to sabbatical leaves, course reductions, and buy-outs for research. It's difficult enough to sign up a faculty member for a two or three semesters tour of duty, far less committing them to a three year stretch. This issue could not be swept away, but it was coped with, and faculty tended to be accommodating to the needs of students.

The Need for a Philosophy of Practitioner Inquiry

The impact of the researcher/practitioner dualism on the program is a part of what I would call the negative climate surrounding the EdD conceived as a practitioner degree. It demanded, in my view, a critique, not simply to counter the negativity of the chorus of dualists, research "methodolators," and step-by-steppers, but also to provide a philosophical rationale that offered a less disparaging conception of practitioner inquiry—one that placed practitioner inquiry on a stable and intellectual footing.

In the process of composing an EdD proposal, a considerable amount of thought was devoted to statements of the program rationale and general program aims and objectives. These reflections brought up deeper issues relating to the nature of inquiry in general and of practitioner inquiry, specifically. What could be said about the nature of practitioner inquiry? What value did it have? And how did this work fit in with other forms of research?

Although the program rationale and aims addressed the requirements of university approval and program accreditation, they fell far short of those deeper issues concerning the status of the EdD—especially in respect to the those views, widely held, of the lower standing of practitioner inquiry in comparison to that of "authentic" research. The incoming EdD students, in my view, deserved better. The program, in other words, needed a more thought out account of practitioner inquiry as a legitimate, purposeful endeavor aimed at understanding practical problems and aiming at improvements in practice.

My view was that this was a philosophical task that demanded a critique of the elitist biases that placed researchers above practitioners in the educational pecking order, provided support for practitioner inquiry as a legitimate form of research, and offered justification for doing the EdD differently to the PhD. And by "different" we meant that the program would offer a clear departure from the linear, step-by-step routines of traditional doctoral education conducted by the student, under their own steam; a program in which the aim isn't to prove yourself by completing a project that adds to the knowledge base, but aims at bringing about improvements in practice in the company of students who are similarly engaged. This task would require a philosophical reorientation in how to think about the nature of research and the role of inquiry in the improvement of practice.

A naive scientism is a pervasive force in colleges of education. One reason for this is connected, I feel, to the biases built into university hierarchies. At one time it was the classics that lorded it over the lesser disciplines. Nowadays, natural science—the more mathematical the better—is top dog. Quantitative ranks higher than qualitative research—explanation is valued

above interpretation. Fundamentally, the form it takes in colleges of education is that of status seeking by appropriating the esteem held by the sciences.

In order to illustrate the nature of this scientistic outlook in shaping faculty and student thinking about doctoral education, I can do no better than relate a narrative that a colleague would communicate every year to incoming doctoral students. The talk, aimed at both inspiring the students and informing them about how to become researchers, invited them to picture knowledge as a wall built up brick by brick through the efforts of individual researchers. Their task was, first, to achieve familiarity with the wall; then, to locate any gaps; and ,finally—this would be their research project—to fill in the gap with a research brick of their own. One has to admire the simple economy of this image—the nicety of its linear sequence of tasks, beginning with command of the subject matter and followed up with a trial/test/ordeal by which the doctoral candidate might demonstrate their skill in research. I imagined the story being recounted to the accompaniment of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*—"Hey teacher! Just another brick in the wall!." No thought here of removing bricks through falsification (Popper), or dashing down the entire edifice and building something new (Kuhn). The brick-in-the wall conception of science was uprooted decades ago, but the word apparently has failed to reach many ears. The brick-in-the-wall story is nothing more than a fairytale: what Feyerabend refers to as a patterns that hypnotize us (*The Tyranny of Science*, p.13). But it is, nonetheless, a narrative that carries undoubted potency.

The image of the wall suggests conformity to established norms and a fixed knowledge base. You achieve doctoral status by fitting in. You become a member of the club—the privileged members of the class of specialists who are the builders of the wall. PhD students are novices in

research who have to prove their worth by making a contribution that fits with the established knowledge base.

In order to overcome this way of thinking and valuing, we needed a philosophy that provided both a critique of the scientistic image of the brick in the wall. In effect, we were saying: "We don't need your education!" Secondly, we were looking at another approach to doctoral studies—one that offered a more constructive approach to practitioner inquiry. Not one that placed practitioner inquiry on the low end of the totem pole, but regarded it as an alternative that aimed, pragmatically, at improving practice. The program would provide a better, more constructive, and less subordinate way of approaching problems of practice. In sum, educational research is not one of the natural sciences and should not be understood in its terms. Better to understand it as a practical concern with multiple aims and a diversity of methods.

Wittgenstein's indictment of scientism, which he saw as a result of our "craving for generality" provided a useful, philosophical foundation for the EdD. "Our craving for generality," he adds, "has another main source: our preoccupation with the methods of science… instead of 'craving for generality' I could also have said 'the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case'" (Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books*, p. 18).

In addition to Wittgenstein, Popper, Feyerabend, and others have urged us to look at knowledge acquisition in a different way from the one depicted in the brick-in-the-wall narrative. Viewed from this perspective the sciences, social sciences, and practitioner inquiry are just various patterns of organization and conduct, among many other activities that we use to seek solutions to problems. Feyerabend ask: "is it really a disadvantage that there are many different areas of research which are run by people with different interests and produce widely different

results?" (*The Tyranny of the Sciences*, p. 9). Feyerabend invites us to think of the sciences and humanities, religion, and the arts as "spiritual supermarkets" composed of different departments. I'd like to propose that we look at practitioner inquiry as a department within the arts section of the supermarket. This suggests that practitioner inquiry requires a different narrative from the "one more brick in the wall" fictional story related above.

The principal virtue of the "brick in the wall" story, if it can be said to possess any virtues, is that it is a straightforward depiction of the researcher, an attempt to yoke educational research to a hard-header, positivist version of science. It does possess a certain appeal, I suppose, in motivating aspiring researchers, and in laying out for them a clear path to a specific goal—membership of the elite and select group of wall builders. All of this presented with a scintilla of modest achievement in the contribution of one small part in a vaster enterprise. Once you've made your contribution then welcome to the club.

I have written above that the EdD required a philosophical background that provided a less divisive, more ennobling view of the practitioner researcher. We needed, in effect, a philosophy that would bring to light a different narrative about research and the work of the researcher. My view is that we should look on practitioner inquiry as a form of artistry along the lines developed by John Dewey in his work on aesthetics in *Art as Experience*.

Dewey's Aesthetics Applied to Practitioner Inquiry

It would not be a stretch to claim that there has always been a division between the researcher and the practitioner in Western thought and values. It is part of the Platonic heritage in European philosophy—the separation between, on the one hand, the ideal world accessible only

to those who live the higher life of the intellect; and the sensual world of practical affairs in which we operate on a lower plane. This Platonic partitioning of thought and value is also evident in the distinction between the ideal and the real, between thought and action, and to the distinction between the general and the particular. Dewey has argued that a species of this kind of dualistic thinking exists in our Western view of art in which the art object is revered as a kind of "ethereal thing"—something that possesses an almost magical or spiritual quality (*Art as Experience*, p. 26). Similarly, the artist is venerated as someone with special status, as the possessor of preternatural sensitivities and gifts of creative expression. Someone for whom the normal rules do not apply:

> *The factors that have glorified fine art by setting it upon a far-off pedestal did not arise within the realm of art nor is their influence confined to the arts. The forces at work are those that have removed religion as well as fine art from the from the scope of the common or community life (A as E, p. 12).*

Dewey's aim is to heal this rift by offering a different account of the arts and the work of the artist by reconnecting art with living. Art, he states, is "prefigured in the the very process of living" (AAE, p. 30). I believe that this approach offers a constructive way of viewing practitioner inquiry in the EdD—a non-divisive view centered on the idea of practice as an art of professional development as well as an exercise in problem solving. In effect, the view offers a new narrative that compares the EdD practitioner researcher to the artist.

Many of the activities that we engage in routinely demand little reflection, especially if they are repetitive and carried out in a sort of mechanical way. Dewey viewed our actions on a continuum. At one end they are either loose, discursive, humdrum, constrained, mechanical, or

coerced. At the other end of the scale, our actions possess a formal unity of emotion and reflection, incorporating interests and purposeful action (*Art as Experience*, p. 51)

A Different Narrative

As a program with a difference, a new narrative (with a grounding metaphor) was needed to the wall story; but different in what ways?

1. A story/metaphor that would offer a justification for the structure of the program.
2. A story/metaphor that would focus on process and not product—builders not bricks.
3. In dealing with outcomes, the story should focus on pragmatic outcomes over theoretical/ knowledge outcomes—making things work (value added) over theoretical justification—logic of discovery as opposed to logic of justification (Popper).
4. The idea of becoming a practitioner researcher that builds on prior experience as an inclusive process (of adding experiential value), as opposed to a form of initiation into an elite—a club with an exclusive membership.
5. Experimentation as trying things out rather than governed by adherence to a prior notion of scientific experiment.
6. Reliance on local knowledge and local expertise over theoretical knowledge—respect for particular knowledge as well as universal, theoretical knowledge.

This emphasis on the maker rather than the product; on the doer rather than thing done; on the artist rather than the artifact points to processes that are of a similar nature to those of artistic creation. William Morris writes that the artist's work is "the pleasurable exercise of ones

energies"—that art implies a sense of pleasure in the act of doing as much as in the effect. But what can we mean by calling the practitioner researcher a kind of artist? Surely not all activities constitute artistic creation? Isn't a comparison with say a poet or a painter or sculptor a bit of a stretch? If we can all agree that the practitioner researcher produces something (is a maker of some kind of thing), is it not a bit absurd to think of that something as a work of art? Perhaps the practitioner is better thought of as practicing a craft—as more like a craftsperson rather than a poet or painter. Surely the work of the artist must be distinguished from other forms of making things, whether they be making objects of manufacture or in organizational systems or the implementation of practices.

R.G. Collingwood makes a distinction between art and craft. They are different *kinds* of activities. In order to make this distinction, he makes use of the differences between cause and effect, and planning and execution: "the result to be obtained (in a craft) is preconceived or thought out before being arrived at" (p. 15). This is assuredly not the concept of work implied in doing practitioner research. It is, perhaps, more useful to think of the distinction between art and craft as one of *degree*. William Morris, the founder of the arts and crafts movement, argued that there was no barrier between art and craft and that the craftsperson is not bound to slavishly follow a preset plan, but is free, in varying degrees, to adapt, even transform, the product or make small modifications in process as well as outcome. Art, workmanship, craft, handicraft, all imply, in varying degrees, refinement of the work in progress to particular circumstances.

The following are offered as examples of artistic experimentation, of the working out of problems emergently—that is in the process of making something or making something happen.

1. *From Uniformity to Diversity*. From the end of prohibition in 1933 to the 1970s, brewing beer in the US was dominated by a few large breweries—Pabst, Budweiser, Coors, etc. Each of the big brewers produced beers that were pretty much the same in look and taste. Their efforts were directed to brewing a standardized product. In the 1970s this homogeneity gave way to an explosion of interest in craft brewing, yielding a wide range of diverse tasting beers. President Carter accelerated this process by legalizing home brewing in 1978. This gave impetus to experimentation by home brewers, producing a wide array of different styles of beers—IPAs, stouts, lagers, and ales. Although brewing beer involves the same basic chemical reaction and operations, mixing malted barley, hops, and yeast; the potential for producing different beers by modifying the ingredients, and employing a creative approach to the brewers work is immense. Initial efforts, one imagines, were more a matter of trial and error; but as brewers gained experience, each gain added more control over technical aspects of the process with a resulting gain in the variety of brews and taste. Failure would not necessarily amount to a loss, but a gain in expertise. Some batches would be poured down the drain; future batches would reap the benefit from a gain in knowledge and control over technical aspects of the process. The growth of craft breweries brought sweeping changes to the model offered by the big breweries. In place of the one model for all, craft brewing has produced a huge diversity of different beers—over four thousand beers from 2,300 breweries in 2019 (Matthew Shaer, *Home Brew Hero*, Smithsonian, Vol 51 #3, pp. 35-45).
2. *Getting It Right*. In his introduction to *The Story of Art*, with reference to Raphael's "Virgin of the Meadows." Ernst Gombrich discusses how artists "worry" over details of their work

in order to "get it right." As Raphael's sketches for the painting make clear, he took great care in getting the relationship between the infant Christ figure and mother "just right." The sketches reveal that he tried out numerous combinations in order to achieve the correct balance between mother and child. Gombrich writes that there are no fixed rules in such striving: the artist simply feels the way. But there is more to this process than Gombrich's comments reveal. Three aspects are worth pointing out. The first is that Raphael doesn't do this entirely in his head; he actually has to see each version sketched out in order to make a judgement about the correct balance between the two figures. It's not simply that he had an image in his head and then painted it. The work involved some experimentation and problem solving ability that was conducted in the process of making the work of art. Secondly, this process of trying things out involved technical expertise. The sketches had to be sufficiently developed to reveal to Raphael how well the relationship that he was after might be realized. Thirdly, the experience and judgement of the artist concerned with the process of solving the question of the right balance between the figures is essential to making the right choice. Even if we have never painted, as Gombrich points out, we can understand these processes of "getting things right" in art in more mundane situations; say, like arranging flowers in a vase in order to find a pleasing arrangement

3. *Revising and Excising*. Ask any writer what is the most important part of their work, and they'll probably tell you it's revising. Roald Dahl, for example, says that good writing is essentially rewriting. And revision isn't simply a matter of alteration or addition. Many writers favor excision over adding more words. Arthur Quiller-Couch's advises: 'Whenever you feel an impulse to perpetrate a piece of exceptionally fine writing, obey it —whole-

heartedly—and delete it before sending your manuscript to press. *Murder your darlings.*' The wall metaphor that I presented earlier conceived of research as a matter of simple addition such as providing new insights, or providing confirming evidence. But writing suggests that this is not the only way to add value— improvement in writing, as in practical affairs, may be a matter of correction, omission, or deletion—of adjusting parts of the whole, ignoring what may be regarded as routine or commonplace , and unseating cherished rules of practice.

4. *Collaboration*. William Morris railed against the tyranny of the division of labor in degrading the quality of modern life. Although it increased efficiency and productivity considerably, he felt that it had also diminished our ability to find pleasure in work, by making it repetitive and unrewarding. And although the division of labor was mostly associated with commercial and industrial work, he abhorred its effects on traditional crafts and the arts:

> That field of the arts, whose harvest should be the chief part of human joy, hope, and consolation, has been, I say, dealt hardly with by the division of labour, ….nay, so searching has been this tyranny, that it has not passed by my own insignificant corner of labour, but as it has thwarted me in many ways, so chiefly perhaps in this, that it has so stood in the way of my getting the help from others which my art forces me to crave, that I have been compelled to learn many crafts, and belike, according to the proverb, forbidden to master any… (Morris, *Making the Best of It*, http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/hopesandfearsmarxists.html)

Morris viewed the work of the artist as a collaborative endeavor. From his early years with the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, works such as the murals at Oxford Union Society — painted by a "jovial" group including Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti—to his later years working on the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Morris worked in close association with other

artists and craftspersons in achieving some of his greatest creations. A poet or a painter might work in untroubled seclusion, but such privateness is no a defining quality of the arts—much of it involving an alliance of skilled specialists and collaborators.

On Doing Practitioner Research and on Writing a Report

The name of John Dewey was invoked quite a lot during the planning stage of the EdD as a kind of philosophical guide or guru. We were particularly influenced by his view of inquiry and the role of reflection in human problem solving. As I mentioned earlier, the EdD was conceived as a program with two major inquiry projects that would engage the students as problem solvers.

The first was a group consultancy project; the second, a project, usually conducted individually and dubbed a "dissertation in practice" following the terminology and ideas being developed by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate. The first project, then, was one that invited the students to deal with problems submitted by clients—usually administrators in local public and private schools. The second project emerged during the course of the program as a problem for the students to solve; that is, a problem that they had come to see, during the course of the program, as one that they felt was important to tackle.

Dewey is a familiar figure to most educators due to his association with learning by doing. We aimed to deepen that awareness by drawing more deeply on Dewey's account of the nature of experience. Fundamental to Dewey's aesthetics is the concept of *an* experience, with emphasis on the indefinite article. An experience is not something that is done to us, nor are we passive recorders of what goes on in the world. We engage with our would in a dynamic and interactive manner—one in which there are phases of harmony and disruption, equilibrium and

disequilibrium. When our equilibrium is disturbed in some way, when we encounter unexpected occurrences, we are not just brought to a condition of sharpened awareness, we also experience an emotional response that awakens reflection and a desire to reestablish equilibrium. This is not simply a matter of restoring harmony—a backward step. We wish, rather, to achieve a new relation with the world. This process of establishing a new harmony requires information gathering and analysis; experimentation, broadly conceived as trying things out; and the application of skilled practice. What appealed with Dewey's way of looking at inquiry is that it is sufficiently broad to open up pathways that are not seen as the traditional forms of educational research: projects, that is, that are emergent and unfold in unpredictable ways involving processes of experimentation, interactive engagement, and reflection.

The idea of liberating the inquiry projects of the EdD students from the strangling constraints of the typical PhD dissertation came manifestly clear as the first cohort of students approached the second project—the dissertation in practice.

There was no shortage of PhDs around the college and the students' workplaces with chilling stories of personal dissertation ordeals to warn our EdD cohort about what an awful prospect they faced in writing up a dissertation and to offer advice on how to go about the dissertation writing process. Most of it, no matter how sincerely offered, was misplaced and of no value, in my view, to our students. We were, after all, doing something different in the EdD. Two issues of importance arose from the conflict between advice on traditional education dissertation processes and the needs of our EdD students—one of substance; the other of style.

First, the dissertation in practice, as the phrase implies, is not simply a piece of writing, but primarily a project—in Dewey's terms, we should think of the doings of the artist and not

simply the work of art produced. Although PhDs in eduction are also engaged in doing projects, the emphasis on the written dissertation often takes precedence, and there is little direct oversight on how the student conducts the project. As a result, the quality of the written document becomes paramount and the governing consideration over directing the students in conducting their project.

This gives rise to the second issue—the nature of the advice that students are given in writing their dissertations. It is almost universally agreed in the field that a dissertation in eduction should be composed of five distinct parts (occasionally six)—an introduction including a problem statement, a review of the literature, methodology, findings, and conclusions and discussion. This time-honored formula is a version of the five paragraph expository writing format that students learn in high school. It is a heuristic that dates back to Cicero and probably further back to the Ancient Greeks. In Latin the five parts are: *exordium, narratio, confirmatio, refutation*, and *peroratio*. The format seems to fit in nicely with the sort of brick-in-the-wall, step-by-step writing required by in the traditional dissertation, and its usefulness in that sort of project is well-established. However, it fits in poorly with the emergent nature of the problems of practice and the kinds of report writing required of students in the EdD.

A further issue arises with advice about matters of style. It is my experience in years of working with education students that no matter how articulate and lucid they are in their everyday expression and informal writings, they are often afflicted with a serious case of obscurity and incoherence in composing a research report. Why? One problem is that they feel they have to adopt a more ‘objective” tone and manner of writing, which they are unfamiliar with. Use of the personal pronoun, they feel, is prohibited in research reports, and their

sentences are required to conform to a passive rather than active voice. This banishes the agent from the action in a way that is meant to simulate a detached, scientific, "view from nowhere." However, its effect on the students in misrepresenting or distorting the relationship of the problem-solver to the problem is to produce a kind of stylistic paresis that constrains them and is ill-suited to the kind of action-oriented work in which they are engaged.

What kinds of writings are more suited to the projects of practice that the EdD students conduct? A better alternative, in my view, would be some kinds of narrative writing. Students should tell the story of their projects. This could be sequenced chronologically, but not necessarily. Narratives are much more suited to the kinds of emergent issues/problems that they encounter in pursuing their dissertation in practice. Think, for example, of the project as a detective mystery story. Anne Cleaves, Vera Stanhope stories present an illuminating example. A murder has been committed. Who done it? Evidence is collected, suspects identified, and possible lines of inquiry followed. Vera pursues and then rejects various pathways. There's no clear, preexisting formula leading to the solution, no step-by-step recipe for solving a crime. It's more a matter of doggedly gathering the evidence and selecting what matters and discarding what does not; of following through on suspicions about what might work, of considering intuitions, of trying them out and seeing if they, in fact, do work. Often, it entails retracing the steps and trying a new tack.

Two important corollaries result from this way of looking at things. The first concerns how we should regard failure in achieving what one has set out to accomplish. Students often expressed their concern that they might fail in their efforts to solve a problem of practice. But failure can be an advance in discounting one approach and a step forward in achieving a new

alternative. Failure in one regard is an aid in pointing to future work. It might not be possible in the time allotted for the practitioner researcher to follow every option to a solution, but ruling out one or two of the options can be regarded as a constructive step.

The second consequence with adopting a process over product perspective is that it makes the practitioner inquirer central to the inquiry. By that I mean that practitioner inquiry is not simply about solving problems of practice, it's also about become a better problem solver. It is this change of emphasis from action to agent that influenced my own views on practitioner research and helped me to see that we should look on the EdD projects not simply as a matter of the quality of the product, but as a matter of artistry in how it was done. In effect, practitioner research could be constructively understood in the same terms as the practice of a form of art.

Practitioner Inquiry as an Art

What is the nature of practitioner research considered as an art? First, practitioner research possesses the formal characteristics of a problem solving experience considered as *an* experience. An experience connects various events into a unity that share certain common feature that form a pattern consistent with Dewey's account of problem solving. An experience, then, begins when something disruptive occurs that upsets our equilibrium—something unsettles us and provokes an emotional response. These are the moments when reflection begin. Sometimes this is all that occurs, and the problem dies on the vine; but at other times, disruption and reflection evoke thoughtful responses and emotions that lead to deliberation and resolve to pursue fitting actions, designs, and undertakings. Thus, *an* experience may be seen as a pattern of

events and actions that possess emotional force, focused perception, and applied intelligence leading to fulfillment or consummation.

Secondly, practitioner research unfolds in ways that allow for the emergence of solutions in the process of problem solving. Projects in the EdD program tended to follow their own dynamic and not any preconceived plan. Initial efforts were often directed to rethinking the problem; later developments, required flexibility of approach; and final reports were often far different from what the students had initially envisioned.

Thirdly, experimentation, understood in the manner of trying things out in practice, seeing how things fit together, or seeking ways to "get it right" (Gombrich), is a vital part of the process that allows for the emergence of solutions in the process of working things out. There is, as Dewey points out a tendency to view experimentation as the special preserve of the scientist. But this tendency focuses attention on a much narrower idea of what is involved in conducting experiments; but a different view embraces the broader idea of experimentation of experimenting as the exploration of options. In this sense the artist, and practitioner researcher, is a born experimenter (*Art As Experience*, p. 148)

Fourthly, by viewing practitioner research as an art, we honor the place of the practitioner as a knowledgeable professional engaged in developing expertise and technical mastery in their field. There are several aspects to this knowledge: familiarity with the local scene, capacity to question assumptions and not take established practice for granted, commitment to the development of technical skill in problem solving. There is always an aspect of the personal and creative in practitioner inquiry.

In conclusion, all works of art , including practitioner inquiries, are the outcome of a certain quality of human experience: they are about human enrichment about the processes of adding value to the things we do.

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