Telling Tales: Metanarratives, Counternarratives and Other Stories in Lifelong Learning Successes and Futures

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Invited keynote address presented at the 5th International Lifelong Learning Conference, Rydges Capricorn International Resort, Yeppoon, 17 June 2008
Multiple Thanks
The opening keynote presentation

The emotional dimension of lifelong learning

Help!!!

A public health warning
Overview of presentation

- Initial musings and conference themes
- Some conceptual resources
- Five potential sites of meta- and counternarratives
- The other keynote presentations
- Three broader and deeper telling tales
Initial musings

• Lifelong learning as life imprisonment
• “When would the fun start?”
• Lifelong learning as potential:
  - discourse
  - metaphor
  - rhetorical device
  - talisman
• “Telling tales”
Conference themes

- 2000
- 2002 Building learning communities through education
- 2004 Whose responsibility and what is your contribution?
- 2006 Lifelong Learning: partners, pathways and pedagogies
- 2008 Lifelong Learning: reflecting on successes and framing futures
Some conceptual resources

• Metanarratives
• Counternarratives
• Other types of lifelong learning stories
• Four caveats
Traveller education

TEACHING traveller CHILDREN
maximising learning outcomes

Patrick Alan Danaher, Phyllida Coombes and Cathy Kiddle
Foreword by Arthur Watts
Strategic Uncertainties
Ethics, Politics and Risk in Contemporary Educational Research

Contemporary educational researchers encounter all kinds of ethical and political dilemmas and tensions in conducting research in postmodern contexts. In doing so, they must engage with research as “risky business”, and they must adopt strategies that will maximise benefits and minimise harms arising from their projects.

The chapters in this book elaborate the authors’ respective and multiple efforts to embrace these challenges. Each chapter takes up different ways the idea of Ian Stenoch and Maggie MacLure (1997) that research is full of “strategic uncertainties” that create opportunities to question, disrupt and transform existing epistemologies of marginalisation. One chapter is about Japanese and Norwegian whaling, one about researching with English Gypsies and one about Vasaamalan marginalised people; the other chapters depict research about Australian education. All the chapters demonstrate the international relevance of their research.

The 14 chapters are divided into four sections:
- researching language and literacies
- research collaborations
- researching environments and spaces
- researching technologies.

Strategic Uncertainties contains theoretically framed and methodologically rigorous reflections on many of the ethical and political risks in educational research in the early 21st century, as well as practical strategies for engaging with these risks.

Preface by Dr. Janus McCannan, Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning Services, Central Queensland University, Australia:

I commend the editors and the authors, and I wish all of us well in the vital endeavour of seeing the challenge presented by the strategic uncertainties of researching and administering and managing—contemporary educational policy and provision.

Foreword by Professors Ian Stenoch and Maggie MacLure, Institute of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom:

... this book, we all agree, is about certain forms of strategic yet delicate uncertainty (or make that deceptively if you want to keep going).

Respondent’s conclusion by Dr. Maireon Keny, Independent Scholar, Ireland:

[The authors] work demonstrates how a university can be a school of thought in the truest sense. The highly diverse work of these contributors adds to the pool of expertise, to the “learning culture within the academic body itself”.

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Educational research

Strategic Uncertainties
Ethics, Politics and Risk in Contemporary Educational Research

Editors
Phyllida Coombes
Mike Danaher
Patrick Alan Danaher
Measurement and evaluation

- Part of rationale for “reflecting on successes” in conference theme
- Good for identifying who is in and who is out and differential levels of access and equity
- Integral to accounts of acquiring competence, online education, student achievement, self-assessment, work readiness, graduate satisfaction, workplace learning and community engagement
- Focus on respecting diversity and situating understanding might collide with reducing such diversity and standardising experiences and aspirations
Information literacy

- A major theme in every conference has been information literacy as both crucial for, and a means of reflecting on, lifelong learning successes.
- Partly those successes associated with developments in generic skills, graduate attributes, benchmarks and standards.
- Those same developments potentially metanarratives if their assumptions are not interrogated and if their applications are generalised and imposed.
Informal learning

- Increasing focus in this conference series
- E.g., older adults in New Zealand, University of the Third Age in Victoria and British National Federation of Women’s Institutes
- Informal learning as counternarrative by disrupting deficit views of particular groups of learners
- Informal learning potentially as metanarrative when we are urged to “make informal learning work”
Hamish Coates’s keynote presentation

- “Emerging trends in evidence-based quality enhancement”
- Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
- uniTEST
- Work Readiness Assessment Package
- Student engagement and quality assurance clearly vital to maximising various enactments of lifelong learning
- Like any discourse, student engagement and quality assurance potentially at risk of narrowing the focus and homogenising the experience
Lana Jackman’s keynote presentation

- “National Forum on Information Literacy: Advocacy in action”
- Information literacy as “The core foundation for effective lifelong learning practice”
- Information literacy also as “A habit of mind and skill set essential for empowering individual growth and achievement in the Age of Information”
- Evidence of success in disseminating awareness and ownership of information literacy
- Challenges and opportunities in globalisation, technological advances and demographic changes worldwide
- Discursive dissonance between evidence-based research and some approaches to information literacy
Fred Lockwood’s keynote presentation

- “Meeting the challenge: Increasing access, exploiting the use of C&IT and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching”
- Access, educational media and quality (assurance) are all vital elements of counternarratives contesting existing inequities
- Access, educational media and quality (assurance) are all potential vehicles for replicating those inequities by means of metanarratives
- Access, educational media and quality (assurance) can also tell other kinds of lifelong learning tales (e.g., about change, innovation and/or sustainability)
So what?

- The interplay between metanarratives and counternarratives
- Power and resilience of metanarratives
- Difficulty of identifying permanent and incontrovertible lifelong learning successes to be reflected upon
- Framing lifelong learning futures must encompass the telling of and listening to multiple tales – metanarratives, counternarratives and many others
Broader and deeper telling tale no. 2

Broader and deeper telling tale no. 3

Telling tails 1 of 2
Telling tails 2 of 2
Invitation to a couple more telling tales/tails

- Discussion (if there’s any time left!)