

## **Action Research as a Change of Being (0012)**

**Gibbs** Paul<sup>1</sup>, Jonathan Garnett<sup>2</sup>, <sup>1</sup>*The Institute for Work Based Learning Middlesex University, Nicosia, Cyprus,* <sup>2</sup>*The Institute for Work Based Learning Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom*

There have been significant contributions to the understanding of action research particularly surrounding the important exploration of its social critical theory heritage and its resonance with contemporary thought. In reading these, however, we were struck not just by its modernity but by the way it struggles (often successfully) with the ontological in terms of emancipation and the constraints of professional practice. It is the being of an action researcher within the process of becoming a professional that interests us, not explicitly in the debate showcased between Kemmis and Carr and Elliot but in a more ancient sense through the work of Aristotle. In this short paper we would like to problematise the capabilities of becoming professional through an Aristotelian analysis with more than a nod to a Heideggerian interpretation.

We propose that it is not sufficient for the practitioner to engage of action research unencumbered by the desired or intended nature of the change in practice claiming the “issue of the ends of action persists and demands a constant critical vigilance on the part of the practitioner” (Papastephanou, 2010). We agree, but wonder how this vigilance is first obtained and then practised as a professional? In other words, what is the relationship between the capabilities of the practitioner to engage, understand and act to change for the good of others and themselves? How does the action revealed through the research relate to the existing learnt capabilities of the researcher as a being and how do these existing capabilities limit deliberation and the potential action for change in specific situations. These existential concerns are shared by Feldman (2002) and commented upon by Papastephanou when appealing that for “a new connection between philosophical and other kinds of research be established” (2006. p.188).

Jumping ahead of our argument, we think Aristotle might answer this through a discussion of the virtuous accumulation of practical experience for he concludes that “practical wisdom, then, must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods.” (1140b:20/21). To us this raises important issues relevant to discussion of whether action(s) research is an instrumental tool for the enframing of practice within a form of epistemological scientism as the precencing of the ‘formed’ professional teacher or the capability to change in the sense of ‘can do’ clearly meant by Aristotle in the opening lines of both books Δ and Θ of the *Metaphysics*. The paper will discuss these.

## References

- Aristotle, 1995. *The complete works of Aristotle*. Ed. J. Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Elliott, J (2005) 'Becoming Critical: the failure to connect' in *Educational Action Research*, Vol 13, No 3
- Feldman, A. (2002) Existential approaches to Action Research, *Educational Action Research*, 10, 2, 233-251
- Kemmis, S.( 2009), Action research as a practice- based practice, *Educational Action Research*, 17, 3, 463-474
- Papastephanou, M. (2006) Philosophical Research and Educational Action research, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40, 2, 187-200
- Papastephanou, M. Theory, Practice and the Philosophy of Educational Action Research in New Light, *Companion to Research in Education*, (Eds) Reid, Hart, Peters, Russell