

# The Stenhouse legacy and the development of an applied research in education tradition

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the nature of the legacy that Lawrence Stenhouse bequeathed in the field of curriculum development and research, particularly in relation to his idea of ‘the teacher as researcher’. In the process, it explores the contemporary relevance of this legacy to those who are currently attempting to rethink and re-enact the relationship between teachers and the school curriculum in a policy context. It also explores the impact of Stenhouse's work on the development of a collaborative action research movement within the United Kingdom and beyond. The author distinguishes a particular strand of collaborative action research which he depicts as the *neo-Stenhouse tradition* of applied research in education and distinguishes from the *Stenhouse legacy* as such. This distinction is based on a recognition that Stenhouse's legacy and idea of ‘the teacher as researcher’ was *a work in progress*, which he himself acknowledged. Drawing on ambiguities in Stenhouse's thinking about the relationships between educational theory and practice and between teachers and researchers, the author argues that there are strong conceptual links between Stenhouse's idea of ‘the teacher as researcher’ and his account of case study as a method of applied research in education. The paper concludes with an argument for the contemporary relevance of Stenhouse's work, and the tradition of applied research in education he wanted to establish, in policy contexts where curriculum development and research is dominated by a performative model of rationality.

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## KEYWORDS

case study, curriculum design, process model, second-order action researcher, Stenhouse legacy, teacher as researcher

## INTRODUCTION: MY FOCUS AND STANCE IN REVIEWING THE STENHOUSE LEGACY AND ITS SUBSEQUENT IMPACT

My stance in undertaking this review of Stenhouse's work was inevitably shaped by my close association and work with Stenhouse over a period of 15 years. Following his early death in 1982, I participated in the formation and growth of a curriculum development and action research tradition at the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) in the University of East Anglia. Since it had its foundations in the work of Stenhouse, it may be appropriately described as a *neo-Stenhouse tradition* of thinking about the role of 'the teacher as a researcher'. It is a dynamic tradition that informs curriculum development projects and enterprises within the United Kingdom and beyond. As such this tradition—displaying both continuities and discontinuities with Stenhouse's idea of 'the teacher as researcher'—should be distinguished from the Stenhouse legacy on which it has drawn.

School-based curriculum development within the *neo-Stenhouse tradition* was severely challenged by the emergence in England and Wales from 1989 onwards of a state controlled national curriculum that shaped the role of the teacher as a technical operative responsible for implementing its requirements. In 1997, I published an article in this Journal (see Elliott, 1997, pp. 63–74) where I argued that the national curriculum provided a framework for a quality assurance discourse in education that was underpinned by a logic of performativity.

In the concluding section (pp. 81–82), I proposed that teacher research may still have a role to play 'as a search for instabilities in professional practices that are now dominated by the logic of performativity—and the invention of imaginative and challenging pedagogical experiments within the spaces such instabilities allow in the system'. The emergence of curriculum instabilities in performative educational systems, and fresh attempts to rethink the role of teachers in relation to them, opens a new 'horizon of possibility' for the development of Stenhouse's idea of 'the teacher as researcher'. In an account of the emergence of mandatory teacher appraisal in the United Kingdom (see Elliott, 1991 p. 112), I made use of Foucault's theory of power relations to indicate the way in which the increasing intrusion of performative cultures in educational systems provides opportunities for the development of 'teachers as researchers' (see concluding reflections below).

In this paper, I have attempted to clarify for readers what I believe to be the core texts in the Stenhouse legacy and the resources they yield for rethinking the role of teachers as researchers in the field of curriculum development. I have also pinpointed a need to access the work of projects and enterprises that addressed some of the theoretical and practical issues which Stenhouse posed but left as 'unfinished business' for others to resolve.

## THE STENHOUSE LEGACY AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE THEMES IN THIS ISSUE

It is now over 50 years since Stenhouse was depicted in the *Times Educational Supplement* as a 'Chess Player in a World of Drafts'. In the context of this special issue, his ideas echo down the pages as authors drew on his writing to depict the aspects of the educational projects and enterprises they have written about. However, the only publication of Stenhouse to be consistently cited is a former Open University set book, written largely for 'those who wish to mount courses in curriculum and teaching', and entitled *An Introduction to Curriculum*

*Research and Development* (see Stenhouse, 1975, p. viii). It has been hugely influential and widely read, particularly by school leaders and teachers who undertook such courses in higher education institutions over the next decade and a half. As a resource of great scope in providing access to Stenhouse's major ideas and their practical expression in the field of curriculum development, there is probably no equal. It was written after his work from 1967 to 1972 as director of the Schools Council Humanities Project (HCP) had concluded, and which he designed as a curriculum experiment in the absence of measurable objectives (see Stenhouse, 1968). The project provided a basis for his definition of the central problem to be addressed through curriculum study, to be found in the opening chapter of *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. He argued that it 'is the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them' (p. 3). This implies, he argued, that the major characteristic of curriculum development should be 'that ideas should encounter the discipline of practice and that practice should be disciplined by ideas' (p. 3). Based on this dialectical relationship, between theory and practice, he radically redefined the idea of a curriculum as:

An attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice.

(p. 4)

A curriculum for Stenhouse took the form of a hypothesis about an educationally worthwhile process of teaching and learning for teachers to test experimentally in action within their classrooms, and in the process revise and reconstruct. This concept of curriculum lay at the heart of Stenhouse's idea of 'the teacher as researcher'. Stenhouse's (1975) book also goes on to rethink the knowledge-based curriculum in cultural terms, which render claims to knowledge problematic and open to discussion in classrooms. This is then followed by a masterful critique of the rapidly emerging and globalising objectives model of curriculum planning and a well-illustrated account of an alternative process model, which he deployed in designing the HCP. It all provided a context for his chapter on 'the teacher as researcher'.

An earlier book by Stenhouse, entitled *Culture and Education* (1967), prefigures much of the theoretical landscape that he mapped out in *Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, and when read in conjunction with it throws additional light on the early chapters about the relationship between knowledge, the content of education and pedagogy.

In *Stenhouse: an educational life*, Norris (2012, pp. 37–38) suggests that 'it is tempting to think that the public Stenhouse was the product of the curriculum reform movement' in the United Kingdom during the 1960s and 1970s. However, Norris argues, this would be a failure to understand the significance of Stenhouse's contribution to educational thought and practice, because 'he shaped the curriculum reform movement, and while he was not its originator—he nevertheless devised the movement's most ambitious strategy and was its chief theorist'. What marked out his contribution to the curriculum field, for Norris 'was his understanding of the implications of the relationship between education and autonomy and his distinctive conceptualisation of the relationship between curriculum and practice.'

Stenhouse wrote *Culture and Education* in Scotland while working at Jordanhill College of Education in Glasgow as head of its education department. Barry MacDonald, a former colleague at Jordanhill, who subsequently came with Stenhouse to CARE, depicted him shortly after his early death in 1982 as 'that rarity, a myth-maker-generator and refiner of that impossible dream, autonomy with community, that sustains ambition in the educational mission. With his passing education has lost its very best friend---' (cited by Norris, 2012, p. 8).

MacDonald clearly had *Culture and Education* in mind. The book's vision of education as the development of individuality in a context of community underpinned the design and

practical expression of the Schools Council Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP), which Stenhouse had returned to England to direct in 1967, and which constituted his greatest practical achievement in the curriculum field (see Norris, 2012, p. 17).

Both *Culture and Education* and the Humanities Project expressed Stenhouse's ambition to design a curriculum that would render its content relevant to the lives of all young people rather than an elite few. Mary James (2012, p. 75) traced Stenhouse's vision of education back to a paper he published in the Norwegian Journal *Pedagogisk Forskning* in 1963, where she singles out 'a quite remarkable passage' in which Stenhouse 'described how learners are inducted into externally created and curated thought systems and how they also recreate them for themselves' and in doing so both learn and innovate. I think she found it remarkable because he demonstrated that he did not deny the educational significance of learning outcomes, but objected to attempts to prespecify them, on the grounds that a learning process in which individual pupils *deepened their understanding* of the object of learning (knowledge) would inevitably yield a diversity of outcomes. In this issue Humes' paper (2024), following Norris (2012), traces the roots of his originality even further back than James, to his experience in the sixth form of an elite English school; namely, Manchester Grammar School.

*Culture and Education* also prefigured the idea of the 'teacher as researcher', which emerged from the HCP as a means of sustaining the use of a *process model* of curriculum development. Four years after initial publication Stenhouse produced, for a paperback edition, an interesting post-script about the relevance of HCP to the theme of the book. It concludes with a reflection about the practical significance of his idea of 'the teacher as researcher':

A teacher should be able to describe to a colleague what happens in his classroom. At the moment this does not seem possible. To make it possible we need more research which starts from practice.

(Stenhouse, 1971, np)

*Culture and Education* is not often cited, possibly because copies are no longer easily accessed since the demise of *Nelson*, its original publisher. However, an interesting account of its contemporary relevance can be found in Richard Pring's 'Culture: A neglected concept'. This article appears in the book I co-edited with my colleague Nigel Norris, entitled *Curriculum Pedagogy and Educational Research: The work of Lawrence Stenhouse* (see Elliott & Norris (Eds) 2012). Our book was designed 'to explore the major contours of Stenhouse's work and its relevance to educational theory and practice in the 21st century--' and concludes with an assessment of the Stenhouse legacy. It also provides a full list of Stenhouse's published (9 books and 50 articles) and unpublished work.

Given that Stenhouse's *process model* of curriculum planning (see Stenhouse, 1975, Ch. 7) was founded upon the socio-cultural theory of knowledge he developed in *Culture and Education*, it opened a way for him to rethink the teacher's role 'as a researcher' in a curriculum development context. As such the process model offered a different conception of educational aims to the one embedded in the objectives model of curriculum design. Stenhouse argued, after the philosopher Richard Peters (1973, pp. 11–57), that statements about the aims of education often refer to criteria for judging the educational quality of the teaching and learning activities in the curriculum. As such they consist of values and principles of procedure that are built into these activities and render them educationally worthwhile in themselves, rather than by virtue of their extrinsic learning outcomes. For Stenhouse, the use of a process model would necessarily render educational values and principles explicit as a criterial framework for curriculum planning and development. He argued that:

There are criteria by which one can criticize and improve the process of education without reference to an ends-means model which sets an arbitrary horizon to one's efforts. The improvement of practice rests on diagnosis, not prognosis. (1975 p. 83)

This passage clearly expresses the strong link between Stenhouse's idea of 'the teacher as researcher' and his process model of curriculum planning and development, which enables teachers to scrutinise their practice in the light of explicit procedural values and principles implied by their educational aim.

Through the HCP, Stenhouse explored the possibility of designing a curriculum using a process model in the absence of a discipline of knowledge to provide a procedural framework. The HCP (see Stenhouse, 1968) focused on controversial value issues as curriculum content. The pedagogical aim in relation to this content was stated as, 'to develop an understanding of social situations and human acts and of the controversial value issues which they raise'. Stenhouse thought that two implications of this aim were worth pointing out:

First, it is implied that both teachers and students develop understanding, that is, the teacher is cast in the role of the learner. Second, understanding, is chosen as an aim because it cannot be achieved. Understanding can always be deepened.

(Stenhouse, 1975, p. 94)

With respect to the first implication, Stenhouse was clarifying a general implication of a process model of curriculum design that specifies 'understanding', as opposed to inert factual knowledge, as a pedagogical aim. With respect to the second implication, Stenhouse is clarifying a distinction between an aim conceived as a quality of the process of learning and an aim conceived as a product of the learning process. The latter, he argued, misconstrues 'the development of understanding' as an achievement rather than a process.

Stenhouse proceeded to analyse the pedagogical aim of HCP into principles of procedure to govern an educationally worthwhile teaching and learning process. They included the teacher placing discussion rather than instruction at the core of the learning process, and then protecting the expression of divergent views within the discussion. One of the principles aroused considerable controversy in the national media; namely, that the teacher should adopt a procedurally neutral stance when chairing discussions of controversial issues in the classroom. The realisation of such principles of procedure in particular classrooms then became the work of 'the teacher as researcher'.

In the HCP Stenhouse cast teachers in the role of *curriculum makers*; albeit in the process, they were also asked to critique and revise the principles themselves, and thereby become active participants in redesigning the curriculum. In doing so, however, he had assumed that such a nation-wide and large-scale curriculum development as the HCP, operating with a process model of curriculum design, would require an academic as co-ordinating director and a strong central team to support teachers' research. On this basis, he concluded that it was possible 'to operate a design on a process model' without the support of a particular discipline of knowledge.

Explicit examples of procedural principles in action (see Swift et al., 2024) are a source of evidence to the effect that Stenhouse's process model can provide teachers with a lens that enables them to participate as researchers in the curriculum development process despite the policy context of their work (see Bamber et al., 2024). It then becomes possible within specific school contexts for teachers as researchers to resist becoming over-powered by the performative culture that stems from the current education policy context. In this respect, access to the Stenhouse legacy by teachers in schools and colleges is important and will

become increasingly so. It will largely rest on the mediating role of educational researchers in higher education institutions.

## STENHOUSE'S IDEA OF 'THE TEACHER AS RESEARCHER'—A PIECE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

In 1979, Stenhouse gave an Inaugural Lecture at the UEA following his appointment to a Chair in Education. It was entitled 'Research as a basis for teaching' and later reproduced in Elliott and Norris (2012). In it, Stenhouse argued that 'the knowledge taught in universities cannot be taught correctly except through some form of research-based teaching'. The reason for this he claims is an epistemological one; namely, that such knowledge 'is questionable, verifiable and differentially secure'. Unless students understand this, Stenhouse argued, 'what they take from us is error: the error that research yields infallible, authoritative knowledge'. Research-based teaching he claimed has two aspects. First, it will have the pedagogical aim of teaching 'for an understanding of the research process' that warranted a particular claim to knowledge. In this respect, the quality of teaching will depend upon the extent to which teachers also cast themselves in the role of learners with their pupils. Second, teaching for *an understanding of the research process* will be difficult for teachers to realise in practice, given the widespread erroneous conception of research that traditionally shaped their practice of teaching in schools and universities. Hence, research-based teaching will involve a form of applied research to diagnose and overcome constraints on 'teaching for understanding' in the light of criteria implied by this aim.

Stenhouse's Inaugural lecture throws additional light on the relationship between his view of the nature of knowledge, his process model of curriculum design and his conception of applied or action research in education within classrooms. It clearly argues for the centrality of *inquiry* and *discussion* as procedural principles for a learning process that treats knowledge content as an object of speculation and reflection. In my view, it should be regarded as an important component of the legacy that he bequeathed in the curriculum field. In his lecture, Stenhouse is making an eloquent plea to his fellow academic researchers to avoid 'othering' teachers as researchers.

Towards the end of his lecture, Stenhouse argued for the reorganisation of educational research away from structures organised around the 'disciplines of education' towards a form of applied research in education organised around problems that are educationally significant 'in the context of professional practice' (see Stenhouse, 1978, p. 132). Over four decades later, we find the *British Educational Research Association* echoing Stenhouse with its call for more 'Close to Practice Research in Education' (see the discussion of this in the editorial in this issue). According to Stenhouse (p. 133), the reorganisation of educational research around the problems of practice required academic educational researchers to collaborate with teachers as researchers to develop and test practical insights into educational problems within their classrooms.

In his inaugural lecture, Stenhouse further deepened and developed his idea of 'the teacher as researcher'. It is presented as one aspect of a collaborative relationship with academic educational researchers in a process of applied or action research that is organised around significant educational problems. The idea, therefore, implies both a reorganisation of teaching as a practice and the reorganisation of *educational research as a practice*.

Stenhouse's inaugural lecture was published some 7 years after his work on the HCP had drawn to a close and 4 years after the publication of *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. It should be viewed as a further development of his idea of 'the teacher as researcher', which he regarded as a piece of 'unfinished business' back in 1975. The project

depicted by Bamber et al, (2024) in this issue is practically aligned with the idea of 'applied educational research' that Stenhouse outlines in 'Research as a Basis for Teaching'.

Stephen Kemmis (1995, p. 93), a former member of CARE in the 1970s, also claims that a primary aim of Stenhouse was to develop an alternative tradition of educational research, 'which would give teachers a central role in the development of educational theory' and in doing so 'develop a new tradition in the relationship between teachers and educational researchers'. However, he claims that Stenhouse's own thinking about 'the teacher as researcher' contains ambiguities that prevented him fully resolving the issues he had raised about the relationships between theory and practice and between teachers and educational researchers. These ambiguities, he argues, were rooted in a common confusion between *theory and practice* on the one hand and *thought and action* on the other hand (p. 81). Kemmis concludes that the aim of developing 'teachers as researchers' implies a recognition of the inseparability of educational theory and practice as a design principle.

Stenhouse's account of curriculum development in action does indeed recognise the inseparability of theory and action as a curriculum design principle and its implications for the role of 'the teacher as researcher', as papers in this special issue acknowledge. Yet, as Kemmis claims, this is sometimes contradicted by separating a conception of 'the plan' as a theoretical category from 'its practical implementation'. He claims that Stenhouse's conception of a *curriculum development proposal* did not eliminate 'the plan' as a key theoretical category. Although he did better than most curriculum designers, Kemmis concludes that his thinking failed in the end to escape 'the snare' of treating practice as categorically separate from and subservient to the theory, principle or plan which guides it. It was then a short step, argues Kemmis, to Stenhouse contradicting himself by sanctioning a *social division of labour* between theorists and practitioners, and thereby differentiating the roles for teachers as practitioners and for educational researchers as theorists.

Such ambiguities of thought, I would argue, are clear in *Research as a Basis for Teaching*. On the one hand, Stenhouse appears to be sanctioning a dialectical process of research-based teaching, in which reflection about means and ends are mutually constitutive processes, while on the other hand sanctioning a division of labour between educational researchers, who generate theory from the study of practice, and teachers who test it in the form of hypotheses within their classrooms.

On Stenhouse's own admission, his idea of 'the teacher as researcher' at the time of writing *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (see 1975, pp. 162–65) remained a work in progress. Particularly at issue towards the end of the Humanities Project were the respective roles and relationships of teachers, curriculum designers and full-time researchers in the development process. Stenhouse writes:

I believe that fruitful development in the field of curriculum and teaching depends upon evolving styles of co-operative research by teachers and using full-time researchers to support the teachers work. This probably means that research reports and hypotheses must be addressed to teachers, that is, they must invite classroom research responses rather than research laboratory responses.

(Stenhouse, 1975, p. 162).

This reflects the relationship that developed in HCP between members of its central team and teachers. The former observed and tape/video recorded project teachers' classrooms and used the data to elicit the teacher's and their pupils' accounts of the situations and events it evidenced. Based on such research, the central team proposed hypotheses about the ways in which teacher's interactions with their pupils in the classroom constrained or enhanced the development of their pupils' understanding of controversial issues. These hypotheses were addressed to project teachers, who were then expected to adopt an

experimental research stance to their teaching by testing these hypotheses in their classrooms. Towards the end of the funded project in 1973, several participating teachers produced case study reports of their classroom research as a contribution to its evaluation (see Elliott & MacDonald, 1974).

Stenhouse viewed two subsequent CARE projects to HCP—both managed on a day-to-day basis by someone other than himself—to embody promising further developments of the idea of the ‘teacher as researcher’. One of these was a project on ‘Teaching about Race Relations’ and the other the ‘Ford Teaching Project’, funded by the Ford Foundation and directed by me (see Elliott, 1976–1977, pp. 2–22; Elliott, 1991, pp. 29–39). Ford T focused on the problems of *Enquiry/Discovery Teaching* across the curriculum. Both projects Stenhouse acknowledged saw the teacher as a major accumulator of data about their own teaching in classrooms for the purpose of self-monitoring and reflecting about their practice in classrooms. The Ford T project, for example, attempted to involve teachers as active agents in both clarifying the aims and principles of Inquiry/Discovery Teaching and gathering triangulation data, which might yield evidence about the extent to which such aims and principles are being realised in practice. Such data—evidencing the points of view of pupils, peers and full-time researchers—provided a springboard for teachers to develop and test their own diagnostic and action hypotheses within an iterative and cyclical process of action research. This did not imply that the full-time researchers on the central team avoided assisting teacher researchers with evidence gathering. A key question was the extent to which the research acts of external researchers, in gathering and using data, facilitated the construction of mirrors that enabled teachers to scrutinise themselves in action, and thereby develop their self-monitoring capabilities. This question defined a *second-order action research role* for the facilitators of teachers' research. In response to a case study of Ford T in action, I claimed that ‘self-monitoring does not negate, indeed it seems to require, monitoring from outside’ (see Adams, 1980, p. 241). However, the latter does require facilitators who are capable of systematic self-scrutiny in the form of *second-order action research*.

Stenhouse, at the end of his chapter on ‘The Teacher as Researcher’ (1975), expressed this view about the Ford T Project:

The project is an excellent example of teachers' adopting a research and development stance to their work and of the development of a researcher role which supports such a stance.

(Stenhouse, 1975, p. 163)

This suggests that he was open to new developments in the ‘teachers-as-researchers’ movement, which expressed new understandings of the relationship between teachers and academic researchers.

The applied research tradition Stenhouse sought to develop was in fact established by subsequent projects and enterprises, which followed on from and were inspired by his work in HCP. Ford T particularly marked a transition between the idea of ‘the teacher as researcher’ embedded in HCP and the idea of ‘the teacher as action researcher’; the latter unambiguously giving teachers a central role in curriculum design and development (see Elliott, 2007, pp. 30–61). An important practical indicator of this transition is a report on Ford T's findings entitled ‘Implementing the Principles of Inquiry/Discovery Teaching: Some Hypotheses’. It was co-authored by project teachers, and practically demonstrated, perhaps more than HCP did, Stenhouse's concept of teacher research as a form of systematic self-study whose ‘findings’ can be made public and open for discussion among professional peers. He also appreciated the scope of the project in choosing a line of self-study ‘which caught the pedagogical implications of a variety of new curriculum developments and



documented the difficulty of realising them in practice' (see Stenhouse, 1975, pp. 163–164). He was referring to the focus on problems of inquiry/discovery teaching.

The 'Teacher-Pupil Interaction and Quality of Learning' (TIQL) Project (1980–82), a sequel to Ford T, also positioned teachers at the very centre of curriculum research and development. Funded by the Schools Council for Curriculum Reform and Examinations, it involved school-based teams of teachers across the age range in a systematic study of the problems of 'teaching for understanding' as a pedagogical aim in an increasingly centralised educational system, which was dominated by what Stenhouse (1975, pp. 94–96) had depicted as a *marking* rather than a *critical model* of assessing pupils' learning. The project was designed as a systematic self-study of the pedagogical tension teachers increasingly experienced between educating and examining/testing, and how it might be resolved in developing their practice. It generated teacher authored comparisons of each other's case studies in which they embedded some *diagnostic and action hypotheses* about the dilemmas project teachers experienced in their classrooms and possible ways to resolve them. These were published in a booklet entitled *Issues in teaching for understanding* by the Schools Council Programme that had sponsored the TIQL project (see Ebbutt & Elliott, 1985). What marked this project as a further development of the idea of 'teachers as researchers' was that the published work of teachers contained systematic critiques of the organisational and policy context that shaped their pedagogical practices, and thereby acknowledged the increasing intrusion of performative criteria into life in classrooms.

The TIQL Project also further developed the concept of second-order action research in which the academic facilitators in the central team systematically engaged in a process of self-scrutiny (see Elliott, 1985). In TIQL both, the practice of teaching and the *practice of research to facilitate teachers action research* became objects of inquiry by both teachers and academic researchers respectively (see Elliott, 1985, pp. 235–262).

The relationship between the 'teacher educator as a researcher' and the 'academic educational researcher' can be subject to reflective self-scrutiny by co-developers of a curriculum innovation. In doing so teachers can transcend Stenhouse's rather ambiguous views about the relationship between educational theory and practice. This enables them to participate as equal partners in the process of gathering and critically interpreting data about teaching and learning activities in classrooms. It also demonstrates a second-order action research role for the academic researchers, in which they ask the question 'Is our role as co-researchers facilitating or impeding the professional development of teachers as researchers?' This question is important in a context where the applied research capabilities of teachers need to be enhanced and where the practice of academic educational researchers needs to change in ways that complement and facilitate the research role of teachers. It is the features outlined above that locate research in a *neo-Stenhouse applied research in education tradition*, and thereby effectively address some of the conceptual and practical issues which Stenhouse posed. In doing so such research demonstrates that it is able to creatively struggle in its action contexts with an invasive performative culture. It also begins to erode the culture of individualism that increasingly became associated with the idea of 'the teacher as researcher', despite Stenhouse (1975) proclaiming:

Each classroom should not be an island. Teachers working in such a tradition (as researchers) need to communicate with one another. They should report their work. Thus, a common vocabulary of concepts and a syntax of theory need to be developed.

(p. 157)

Within a neo-Stenhouse tradition teachers will report their research to each other for the purpose of a reflective discussion, which enables them to both view their practice in the light

of their educational theory and their theory in the light of their practice. Collaborative action research projects, in which teachers report and discuss their research with each other, provides a context that empowers individual teachers to resist the creation of a firm hierarchical division of labour between teacher researchers and academic educational researchers when it comes to the development of theory in relation to the development of practice.

In the process of keeping Stenhouse's ideas alive at least some of these projects, such as Ford T and TIQL, contributed to their further development and evidenced them in practice. In doing so they helped to establish the tradition of applied research in education that Stenhouse aspired to. This tradition is a major resource for re-thinking and re-enacting the role of 'teachers as researchers' in educational systems that are increasingly overshadowed by policies aimed at reshaping them as performative cultures (see Philippou and Tsafos, 2024).

## NETWORKING AND THE GROWTH OF THE NEO-STENHOUSE TRADITION

One of the biggest impacts of Stenhouse's idea of 'the teacher as researcher' via a process of social networking within the UK occurred in Northern Ireland with the development of a province-wide in-service B.Ed. (Hons) programme, which was sponsored by the new University of Ulster from its base in Jordanstown during the 1980s. The programme was designed to support teachers' action research in schools and further education colleges across Northern Ireland. Teachers frequently and regularly met to share and discuss their action research projects with academic staff of the university in local teacher's centre's that were spread across the province. The programme was sustained for nearly a decade during the 1980s, and established links with headteachers and their annual conference. It spawned EARNNI (Educational Action Research Network of Northern Ireland), which for several years held its own annual conference and produced a 'home spun' Journal, in which papers presented at the conference were published. Many of these were reports of action research written by teachers. There were also several papers written by university staff on aspects of curriculum development and research in Northern Ireland. The EARNNI conferences and Journal also enabled an interchange of ideas and experiences between teachers and academic facilitators of action research in England and Northern Ireland.

The in-service B.Ed programme, which spawned the EARNNI network activity, fielded a strong team of academic staff based at UU, which was led by Barry Hutchinson. Although the teachers reported their action research in the form of course assignments and a dissertation only a few members of the academic staff team published papers as facilitators of action research that went beyond the confines of the EARNNI network and its home-spun journal, most notably Christine O'Hanlon, tutor in the field of special education. Her paper in the *Cambridge Journal of Education*, entitled 'Alienation within the profession-special needs or watered-down teachers?' (see O'Hanlon 2008), was based on second-order action research data she gathered in her role as a facilitator of action research in the NI Inset programme. It is based on discussions she held with special needs teachers about their work in NI classrooms.

The province-wide development of 'teachers as researchers' across Northern Ireland, which was facilitated during 'the troubles' by the staff of a higher education institution, appears to have escaped the academic radar constituted by widespread publications of research in peer-reviewed academic journals and books (see McFlynn et al., 2024). This movement was built on the Inservice B.Ed that took place in schools during the 1980s in Northern Ireland and its links to strong academic support from a local university. Its academic

invisibility provides an illustration of the social dynamics that underpinned the development of many projects and enterprises which were inspired by the work and writing of Stenhouse.

As Stenhouse anticipated, teachers as researchers will largely produce reports of their practice for one another. These will not be primarily aimed at an academic audience and therefore fall beneath the 'radar of reports' written with such an audience in mind. Even much second-order research by academic facilitators of teachers' research will be largely reported to teachers or teacher educators in the context of particular enterprises and projects and take the form of case studies (single or collective) based on case data gathered 'close to practice'. Such research may be academically regarded as lacking in 'generalisable findings' to merit publication in refereed academic journals. Reports of teachers' research and second-order research by academic facilitators will tend to be circulated and disseminated for the purpose of discussion via social networks established for this purpose.

Some of the projects and enterprises that followed on from the work of Stenhouse and his associates in the Humanities Project became linked through the establishment of an International online Network for Classroom Action Research (CARN), which originated from the Ford T Project, and was initially funded by the Ford Foundation. It is still flourishing today on a self-funded basis under the revised title of the *Collaborative Action Research Network*, to reflect the spread of research-based professional practices beyond the teaching profession, into such domains as nursing and social work. CARN provided an impetus for the launch of the international refereed *Educational Action Research Journal* in 1993. It also spawned the growth of regional and national action research networks, such as EARNNI in Northern Ireland, an Austrian CARN and the Greek and Cypriot CARN, (see Philippou and Tsafos 2024).

## THE USE OF DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDIES IN NARROWING THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN CLASSROOMS

From 1975 until his early death in 1982, Stenhouse occupied a great deal of his time developing a 'methodology' of case study research. He became concerned about the growing number of case study researchers in the field of education who claimed they were doing *ethnographies*. These included those involved in the evaluation of curriculum development programmes who positioned themselves in relation to a programme as 'outsiders' in possession of specialist methodological expertise.

Stenhouse's 'methodological' position with respect to case study research was first systematically outlined and developed in a paper entitled 'Case study and case records: towards a contemporary history of education'. It was published in 1978 in the *British Educational Research Journal*. As Norris (2012, p. 36) argues of Stenhouse, 'it was the historian's appeal to publicly accessible evidence that underpinned his view about how case study should be developed'. In educational case studies, Stenhouse wanted the interpretation and analysis of situations and events to be clearly distinguished from the evidence on which they are based (the case record) as distinct from all the data gathered (the case data). He claimed that ethnographies did not always make these relationships clear whereas historical case studies did.

In 1980, the *British Educational Research Journal* published Stenhouse's BERA Presidential address (1979) entitled 'The study of samples and the study of cases', in which he non-contestably distinguished two forms of educational research. In doing so he was, as Norris (2012, p. 36) suggests, reaching beyond the paradigm wars between quantitative and qualitative research to create methodological space for both approaches, *in* and *across* the contexts of educational practice. In advocating the study of cases, which support

professional judgements in particular action contexts, Stenhouse argued that what was needed was 'the patient cumulation of studies of cases' (see Norris, 2012, p. 36).

Stenhouse's concern with verification was linked to his attempt to develop a form of educational research that would focus on the actions of teachers in particular contexts and support the development of their practice. In 1979, a year after the publication of his paper on 'case study and case records', Stenhouse gave his inaugural lecture at UEA on 'Research as a Basis for Teaching'. As I argued above, he clarified his view of the relationship between educational research and specific disciplines of knowledge. He argued (p. 132) that 'what is drawn from the disciplines and applied to education is not results or even the theories which give shape to each discipline, but methods of inquiry and analysis together with such concepts as have utility for a theory of education.' This is because, he explains, 'the problems selected for inquiry are selected because of their importance as educational problems: that is, for their significance in the context of professional practice.' For Stenhouse educational research guided by educational problems will contribute to the development of a 'tradition of understanding' about how educational action will shape up in particular circumstances. He claimed that it will only incidentally contribute to the development of philosophical, psychological, sociological and even historical insights. Viewed in this light Stenhouse's interest in methods employed by historians is not because he understood educational research as a form of historical research, but because the latter's methods of data gathering and analysis can be deployed in ways that inform educational judgements in classrooms and schools. The reasons for this may well be, as Stenhouse suggests, because historians share certain things in common with professional educators.

In a posthumously published paper (see Stenhouse, 1985, pp. 263–268), written before his death in 1982, Stenhouse points out that historians write about their own society and in doing so 'assume a shared understanding of human behaviour' that enables them to rely on the knowingness of their readers. Moreover, historians are essentially concerned with supplying documentary evidence about human acts and situations to support critical discussions about their interpretation with readers, who may base their own interpretations on their experience of like situations. Both these aspects of historical inquiry have much in common with Stenhouse's view of educational research. From this perspective, case studies of curriculum development in action should be a product of 'insider research' in which the educational researcher sees their research as sharing the same curriculum goals as the major change agents within the curriculum development process, with the aim of providing evidential support for their practical judgements (see Stenhouse, 1985, p. 266). This need not necessarily imply that such case studies can only be authored by teacher researchers themselves, as a product of their engagement in an action research process within their classrooms and schools. Stenhouse's work on case study appears to be largely concerned with reshaping the research practice of academic educational researchers in higher education. Viewed in this light, he depicts educational case studies as products of educational research which are required to meet the following criteria:

1. They should produce documentary evidence as workshop materials for the discussion of practice by groups of practitioners.
2. They should enable practitioners to self-evaluate their own practice by comparing it with other cases.
3. They should provide a basis for an evidence-based critique of practice, which is crucial to its further development.
4. They should set the development of critique within a broader social and political analysis.
5. The critical study of cases should provide a context for testing the practicality of educational theories and ideas.

These criteria clarify the close practical link Stenhouse sought to establish between the conduct of case study research and teachers' research in their classrooms and schools. For example, the extent to which an educational case study of one teacher's classroom situation offers generalisable insights into the practically relevant features of another teacher's classroom situation is something the latter will have to test by doing research in their own classroom. Educational case studies of life in classrooms are a source of hypotheses for teachers to test in their own contexts of action. As Norris has pointed out, Stenhouse's view of case study as a method of educational research addressed the critical question for him of 'how research relates to particular cases, that is, teachers in particular schools and classrooms and working with a particular class of students'. Norris claims that this question stemmed from Stenhouse's conviction that 'schools and classrooms, teachers and the classes they taught, were marked by a profound particularity' (see Norris, 2012, p. 37). Hence, I would argue with Norris that, for Stenhouse, it was through a particular form of case study that educational research could be used to support rather than supplant the professional judgement of teachers. In advocating the study of cases that support professional judgements in particular action contexts, Stenhouse was establishing a major aim for applied research in education projects and enterprises in the future; namely, 'the patient cumulation of studies of cases' (see Norris, 2012, p. 36).

Although Stenhouse's work on case study was cast as an appeal to academic educational researchers, to reorganise their practice of research, in part if not in whole, in ways that supported the judgements of teachers and facilitated their role as practitioner researchers, it also I believe implied that practitioners themselves could develop the capability to construct their own case studies in ways that satisfied the criteria outlined above. I would claim that many of the case studies authored by TIQL Project teachers satisfied all five of the criteria outlined (see Ebbutt & Elliott, 1985). In this respect, they offer an inclusive 'methodological' perspective on the construction of knowledge rather than an exclusive one that is confined to the work of professional academic researchers. Stenhouse argued that teachers should report their work to one another. This implies that they should author descriptive case studies as a focus for evidence-based discussions about their practice with professional peers and members of the educational policy community?

With respect to the Ford T Project, I claimed that a key question was whether the gathering of data by external researchers on the central team, such as myself, facilitated the construction of case studies as 'mirrors' which enabled teachers to scrutinise themselves-in-action, and thereby develop their self-monitoring capabilities. I argued that they could, but that the issue should be subjected to second-order action research by the academics involved. As a second-order researcher, I pragmatically deployed a range of techniques for gathering and analysing case data, deploying an inventory which I constructed during various projects and enterprises. In this context, I found Stenhouse's distinctions between *case study*, *case records* and *case data* to be useful for organising evidence in ways that enabled teachers to critique their practice and then devise and test strategies for further developing it (see Elliott, 2016, pp. 111–112). In other words, descriptive case studies based on second-order action research by academic facilitators can help teachers to *reflect on* their practice in ways that enable them to *reflect in action* as a means of further improving it. I am using Schon's distinction here to clarify its relevance to the linkage Stenhouse conceptualised between the work of academic researchers and the professional development of 'the teacher as a researcher' (see Posch, 2019, p. 501). It will also imply that descriptive case studies of the kind he envisaged, which satisfy the exemplary criteria he outlined, may also in the longer term enable 'teachers as researchers' to construct their own case studies and thereby meet the requirement to report their work to each other.

Stenhouse's major writing about case study and its use as a source of hypotheses for teachers to test as researchers within their own classrooms is an important component of

the legacy he bequeathed, although many publications that advocate *the development of teachers as researchers* omit this. Stenhouse's work on case study as contemporary history—with its concern for evidence as a basis for verifying and building insights cumulatively into the complexities of the case—resonates in case studies that progressively *sustain and empower* collaborative research by teachers to effect worthwhile curriculum change in their school. Underpinning the systematic and ongoing development of an archive of case studies (see Hulme et al., 2024) is an important insight into the power dynamics of teachers' collaborative action research. It is an insight that Stenhouse would appreciate. Before his death, he was exploring the feasibility of establishing a national archive of case studies and case records.

## THE RELEVANCE OF STENHOUSE TO-DAY: SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Stenhouse did not assume that his vision of education would need to await the creation of an ideal organisational culture before it could influence and shape the work of teachers. From his point of view a start could be made to-day on reshaping that work to address the problems of 'life in classrooms'. In some respects, as I have indicated, he was not entirely clear how this could be done. Nevertheless, despite not living to see 'the assault' on his legacy, which Humes in this issue (2024) refers to, he did anticipate it in certain respects and attempt to arm the teaching profession in responding to it. As James (2012, pp. 61–83) points out, Stenhouse recognised as far back as 1970 'that teachers who profess objectives cannot easily recognise them in intelligent classroom processes'. James argues that it is in the context of this insight that the idea of the 'teacher as researcher' emerged for Stenhouse. I find her argument convincing. In this light I would further contend, that although Stenhouse did not foresee the development of a target-based and highly prescriptive state-controlled national curriculum, if he had lived longer, he would have recognised that it would not work for teachers in classrooms and would create problems in the form of instabilities, which could only be resolved by repositioning teachers as curriculum researchers and developers. Thankfully, the legacy Stenhouse left has bequeathed a framework for addressing these problems. As Foucault (1980) argued:

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence like power resistance is multiple and can be integrated into global strategies.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None to declare.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

### ETHICS STATEMENT

No ethical approval was required for this research.

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