

Exploring the creation of my living theory as I explore my systemic educational responsibility.

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Abstract

I am researching to improve my practice in the role of a senior educational psychologist, with a systemic responsibility for developing inclusive gifted and talented education in an English Local Authority. During the presentation I will provide an account of some of what I have done to contribute to enhancing the educational experiences of young people with values-based explanations by working in living boundaries. These living boundaries are created between, for instance, the school curriculum and the personal curriculum of a young learner, and the world of the Academy and that of the workplace-based practitioner-researcher. I will give an account of my living theory research as an example of that which distinguishes research in a practitioner researcher group affiliated to the Centre for the Child and Family and Liverpool Hope University. The paper will clarify:

- Values-based explanations of how talents and knowledge can be developed and offered in living boundaries by all learners, as gifts to themselves and others;
- My living theory praxis as a contribution to an educational knowledge base, an educational epistemology and forms of evaluation and accountability;
- A relationally dynamic approach to research and developing praxis;
- A creative use of multi-media narrative/s, to understand and communicate meanings of energy-flowing values.

Introduction

Whitehead coins the term 'living educational theory' (subsequently foreshortened to living theory) to describe, '... the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in learning' (Whitehead, 2008, p.14). I am adopting the phrase living theory praxis to identify what I mean by praxis as an expression of theory~practice where values are clarified as they emerge within living boundaries through the process of living theory research.

To communicate my meanings this account is presented in the form of a multi-media narrative that includes:

1. What I mean by living theory praxis
2. My context, systemic responsibility and values.
3. Developing and offering talents and knowledge within living boundaries as gifts
 - a. Creating valued knowledge of the world
 - b. Creating valued knowledge of self
 - c. Creating valued knowledge of self in and of the world in living boundaries
4. A relationally dynamic and multidimensional research approach

1. What do I mean by living theory praxis?

Freire (1972) defines praxis as, 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.' (p.79). Similarly Zuber-Skerritt (2001) defines praxis as, '... the interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action.' (p.15). While simple, these do not communicate the importance of values-based explanations, which I believe are core to an educator's praxis. Carr and Kemmis (1986)

provide a description of praxis that particularly resonates with me:

In *praxis*, thought and action (or theory and practice), are dialectically related. They are to be understood as *mutually constitutive*, as in a process of interaction which is a continual reconstruction of thought and action in the living historical process which evidences itself in every real social situation. Neither thought nor action is pre-eminent. In *poietike*, by contrast, thought (a guiding idea or *eidōs*) is pre-eminent, guiding and directing action; theory directs practice. In *praxis*, the ideas which guide action are just as subject to change as action is; the only fixed element is *phronesis*, the disposition to act truly and rightly. (p.34)

However, I want to go beyond their dialectical notion through a process of researching to improve my practice as described by Jack Whitehead:

As you clarify and evolve a living theory of your practice it is expressed in your workplace as your living theory praxis. (personal email, 2nd April 2010)

I use the phrase 'living theory praxis' to highlight the centrality in evolving praxis as an expression of my professional responsibility as an educator to develop and make public, values-based explanations of my educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations.

I want to go beyond the importance that Carr and Kemmis give to dialectical relationships in their notion of praxis, to bring into focus, 'a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries' (Rayner, 2006) and educational responsibility. To do this I need to find forms of representation that contribute to a relationally dynamic and multidimensional form of research and enhance the communication of energy-flowing values. Text alone does not communicate sufficiently. The best I can do is to invite you to engage with videos, which you can access on YouTube.

I am asking you to engage with this narrative critically and analytically, modes of thinking you will be familiar with, as well as creatively through your imagination and emotions. To appreciate the relationally dynamic and ontological qualities of my values, imbued with energy that is life-affirming and life-enhancing I am asking you to engage with this account through 'head, heart and body' and be as aware of your emotional, visceral and physiological response as you are of your intellectual response. I hope in the process it stimulates some thoughts or a path to explore that might contribute to your own knowledge-creating venture.

2. My context, my systemic responsibility and values

I began by observing that you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer. (Collingwood, 1991, p.31)

I share Collingwood's view that an answer can only be understood in the context of the question. To understand the context of the question in this case, includes understanding something of me, as the person asking the question, 'how can I improve what I do'. As you read and engage with the videos, as well as the text, I hope to give you sufficient understanding of me, my context, work and values for you to understand the question to which this paper offers a response.

At this point I ask you to watch this short video clip (video 1, 1.28mins) as I talk a little about my work. <http://tinyurl.com/3qz6sls>



By introducing video here I hope to begin to communicate something of my personal energy and passion for improving education that is the substance of my living theory praxis, which text alone does not accomplish.

My professional area of influence is as a senior educational psychologist leading on the implementation of the policy on 'high ability' of a small English local authority. I understand as a professional educator I account to others: to the ethical standards of my professional body; the requirements of my employer, and, perhaps most importantly, I hold myself to account to me, to my own values. I believe as a professional educator I am responsible for my practice and I am beholden to continually seek to understand and improve it. To do that I believe I need to research my practice, understanding research in the way Eisner (1993) expresses:

We do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there. (p.10)

Although I would go further and say I do research to try to understand in order to make this world, not just our schools, a better place to be for all.

I registered for a research degree some 30 years ago and eventually abandoned it as I realised the limitations of the form of research I was using, which was, and is, prevalent in education. Suffice it to say here that I was continually drawn to trying to understand academic research and psychology in the context of my work as an educational psychologist and was continually frustrated by the limitations of the traditional approaches to research I came across.

As my work in 'high ability' began to develop in the 1990s my interest in starting again on working towards a research doctorate was renewed. I felt the discipline entailed would help me to develop my understanding and keep it as a priority as I dealt with the day-to-day practicalities of life, which can easily dominate every waking moment. However, it was not until I began to become acquainted in 2004 with living theory (Whitehead, 1989) that I was motivated to register and commit my time, resources and energy to embarking on an academically disciplined research programme with an enthusiasm born of an anticipation of something satisfying, productive and worthwhile emerging.

I have worked as a professional educator all my working life, first as a teacher and then as an educational psychologist. I am committed to public (state) education and to developing educational policy, provision, practice and theory.

I believe that education is more than schooling. I understand schooling to be concerned with the efficient transmission of knowledge, skills and understandings. I see the roles and responsibilities of an educator requiring more than the skills of an instructor or trainer and someone who maintains the status quo. Education, I believe, is concerned with enhancing the ability of a person to develop, offer, and thoughtfully value talents and knowledge of the world, themselves, and themselves in and of the world as gifts that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. I like the way Umberto Maturana communicates something of these sentiments in 'A Student's Prayer'

*Don't impose on me what you know,
I want to explore the unknown
And be the source of my own discoveries.
Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery.*

*The world of your truth can be my limitation;
Your wisdom my negation.
Don't instruct me; let's walk together.
Let my riches begin where yours ends.*

*Show me so that I can stand
On your shoulders.
Reveal yourself so that I can be
Something different.*

*You believe that every human being
Can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
When I ask you to live according to your wisdom.*

*You will not know who I am
By listening to yourself.
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you.*

Through my learning adventures and journeys I have progressed from working as a school psychologist, focussed on perceiving weakness and creating remediating programmes, to a senior educational psychologist with systemic responsibility for leading and coordinating the development of, inclusive gifted and talented educational theory practice provision and policy in a local authority, with the ambition of enhancing the educational possibilities of all children and young people.

I believe each person to be unique and with a responsibility to contribute to improving their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others. In the role of a professional educator I give primacy to my educational responsibility, which is to enhance the experiences of children and young persons that enable them to improve their ability to bring themselves into their own presence and live a loving life that is satisfying, productive and worthwhile for themselves and others.

I want to share with you the understandings I have of my lived and living educational values, which form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of my practice. My values are ontological, that is they are at the core of my being and give my life meaning and purpose. They are lived in the sense I unconsciously and consciously express them in what I do and the way I am. As I do not exist in isolation I recognise my values are relationally dynamic being held, formed and re-formed in that complex ecological space forming the living boundaries between self, other/s and the world. They are living as they evolve and are shaped by my experience of life and the knowledge I create of the world, myself and myself in and of the world.

There are times I find what I am doing is contrary to my values, either because of my ignorance or the circumstances I find myself in. At those times I experience myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989b) and feel a *dis-ease*; I can feel anxious, stressed, angry, distressed... or that vague uncomfortable feeling that things aren't right but I can't put my finger on it. When I am in a sympathetic context, expressing my values as fully as I can in what I am doing, I can recognise a sense of well-being that Csikszentmihalyi (2002) describes as 'flow'.

To share with you my meanings is not a simple matter as the vehicles we have for communication through time and space are limited. What I am trying to communicate is not simply evidence of values expressed in a moment. The moment can only be understood in context; how it was the moment could come about. Shirley Johnson said it most eloquently, 'A word carries a life time of experience.' (Shirley Johnson, poet, 2006 - thanks to Kathie Souter, her daughter, for giving me this quote.)

I experience and understand the present in the context of a *re-membered* past and imagined futures. I say *re-membered* to make clear that the past is as fluid as the future, as memory is a complex dynamic and inter-related personal, socio-cultural and socio-historical reconstructive process.

My living educational values are dynamic and relational and are not adequately communicated through 'fixed' forms of representation. While the meanings created and shared in the here and now, with people physically together, can never be fully communicated through time and space, a multi-media narrative is the best that can be managed at present.

For my multi-media narrative to communicate I believe I need to work hard to 'decentre', as Quinn (1997) describes:

'Decentring is a vital idea. It is the achievement whereby I learn what it is that you need to hear or experience in order to share what is in my mind, whether it be a question, an idea or a supportive anecdote.' (p.86)

He also points out that this is 'very, very hard' and not often broached in school. I will go further and say it is not often broached anywhere else either. Quinn (1997) quotes Wood (1997):

Being relatively inexperienced and lacking expertise in the task of analysing and evaluating their own and other people's verbal communications, most young children assume that failures of communication are necessarily the fault of whoever is listening.

I would suggest that this trait is not just that of young children, I, like many adults, also have a long way to go and I am particularly mindful dealing with an unfamiliar medium. It is interesting to me to find that in trying to communicate to others more effectively I am improving my communication with myself and have begun to listen more attentively to what I and others are saying and to keep trying to go beyond the words to the feelings and implicit understandings.

So, with this in mind I ask you to engage with this video clip (<http://tinyurl.com/3f5ff7a>) of a presentation I made of a paper (Huxtable, 2008) at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference in 2008. I find it personally most uncomfortable to have to look at myself but I do so in the belief that it helps me to understand what I am doing and how other people experience me. I have spent years as a school psychologist using checklists and various approaches to behavioural analysis and found nothing that communicated the real qualities of a person's ontological values expressed and experienced intellectually, emotionally and physically. The integration and emphasis on creating and offering knowledge of self, and self in and of the world with knowledge of the world, as educational gifts is what attracts me to living theory research. It is what distinguishes, for me, living theory research from other forms of self-study and action research as particularly appropriate for me as a professional educator wanting to make a difference that I want to hold myself to account for.

The validity of my claim to know my practice lies in my ability to not only describe and explain my practice to myself but to communicate evidence of the efficacy of what I am saying, which responds to the tests of comprehensibility, truthfulness, rightness and authenticity (Habermas, 1976).

As I look at the video clip (2) of my presentation of the paper which you can access from <http://tinyurl.com/3f5ff7a>. I begin to experience and comprehend how I might be communicating my ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility. It is here that I would like to ask you to take time out of reading to look at the video of that session. The clip is 4:08 minutes in total. I would like to ask you to attend to not only my words but the tone of my voice, the movement of my body in the space and with an awareness of the other participants that form that space. The people I specifically refer to are from my local authority. I know them very well and see them weekly at the Improving Practice Conversation Café, Chris Jones (Senior Inclusion Officer) and Nigel

Harrison (Inclusion Manager and Chris's line manager who has specifically come to the conference to support her).

Eisner (1997) said:

How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know? Those questions and how we explore them can help redefine what educational research means, how it is pursued, and what we can learn from it. It can enlarge our discourse and widen our conceptions. (p.9)

I believe that the forms of evidence needed include video to help communicate the relationally dynamic nature of educational values. I find it most uncomfortable to look at myself but I do so in the belief that it will help me to understand what I am doing and how other people experience. I have spent years as a school psychologist using checklists and various approaches to behavioural analysis and found they do not communicate a person's ontological values. However, I know when a person brings sunshine into a room while others bring rainclouds. I know when a person brings a charismatic energy into a space that excludes (often unintentionally) the influential imagination of others, which contrasts with my experience of being in the presence of a person who brings an inspirational energy that opens a creative space for all.

In these last couple of examples and in the video of my presentation are expressions of ontological values I want to express as fully as I can in my practice. I want people to feel a loving recognition of them selves, to feel fully present in their own lives, and to experience a loving recognition by others. I want to open respectful channels of communication where people feel confident to venture into the living boundaries between themselves and others to create and co-create knowledge without fear that privacy may be violated or vulnerability exploited. I want to express an educational responsibility towards, not for, others.

You may want to pause here and ask yourself why you do what you do and what values you want to express as fully as you can. What is it that you do that gives you a sense of living a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life?

I ask you to hold in mind what, I hope, I am communicating of my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility as you move onto the next section.

3. Developing and offering talents and knowledge within living boundaries as gifts

There are many occasions when knowledge is created but not valued by the creator. In living theory praxis a key motivation is the intrinsic value to the creator of the knowledge created. Inducements and rewards from others may help to initiate and maintain the effort needed but the drive comes from within.

To create knowledge, which may become 'path-leading', requires a considerable amount of dedicated application of time, energy, resources and thought. The work of Ericsson, Roring and Nandagopal (2007) and others suggest that in the order of 10,000 hours 'dedicated practice' over 10 years is needed to get to the foothills of what we currently consider the paths towards the peaks of extraordinary achievement. To dedicate so much time and energy requires a personal commitment. Motivation may come from without as Gardner (1996) points out:

... even seasoned professionals may have a hard time continuing to work, in the absence of at least an occasional acknowledgement or evidence of appreciation. Nonetheless, sustained mastery is a time consuming and demanding process. Unless the individual gains personal satisfaction that is not integrally tied to some regular public recognition, he or she is unlikely to persevere. (pp.258-259)

However, the crucial point is it is the worth a person themselves attaches to what they do, that is needed to keep them going in the face of, what might appear at times, overwhelming difficulties. That worth is often concerned with the expression of a person's values and

recognising what they love to do; the area of endeavour where they gain an aesthetic pleasure creating, enhancing and offering their talents and knowledge freely as gifts.

I recognise that motivations vary. Some people are driven by a lust for power and control, a desire to accumulate resources such as money, land, goods... motives where people are simply acquisitive, egocentric and self serving with no concern for anyone else's well-being or well-becoming. It is important to me that I encourage motivations that reflect values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing and a passion for learning to live a life well for others as well as self. I was therefore particularly pleased to read of Deci's work on intrinsic rewards in Pink's (2009) book, lectures and video presentations: 'Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us'. Deci, Pink and others contend that people work to satisfy psychological needs for autonomy (self directed application of their creativity, expertise and talents to what they are doing), mastery (developing and enhancing expertise and talent) and purpose (making a valued contribution to the common good). In getting these psychological needs met it is postulated that people experience pleasure and fulfilment in what they do.

I would add another psychological need – engaging in passion-led learning. Finding what it is you love doing and having the opportunity to develop and offer expertise, talents and knowledge in that field of endeavour, seems to also give people pleasure and energy required for them to commit the time and effort needed for making the best contribution they can.

What I want for children and young people is that they experience the enjoyment of:

- working hard over time in an area of personal interest, enthusiasm or passion;
- developing their expertise and talents as highly as possible;
- creating and offering knowledge they value as a gift to themselves and others;
- recognising, valuing and creatively engaging with gifts they and others offer.

I believe this adds to the energy derived from doing something that contributes to the common good or 'purpose' elegantly expressed in Covey (2004):

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds. Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world.
The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (p. 9)

There is a pleasure in having dedicated time, effort and imagination to produce something of quality, whether that is a thought, an artefact, or a way of being, which becomes an expression of you – you are the artist, philosopher, psychologist, farmer, craftsman, lover, parent, friend... which is further enjoyed in the pleasure it brings as a gift to yourself and others.

Engaging in something you have a passion, interest, and enthusiasm for is often not equated with work. We often dismiss it as 'play'. In this society, with its history of Puritanism, if you enjoy doing something it cannot be good and you shouldn't be doing it, or as one manager put it, "no laughing in this office – you are here to work!" I see very young children, as yet untainted by cultural expectations, totally absorbed in their work, which arises from their passion for learning, and their pleasure in offering the gift they have created. They do not offer just an artefact, or idea they offer something of themselves imbued in the gift. I wonder whether as adults we don't realise how much of our self is woven into what we do and how much we want our self recognised with love.

I create and sustain a variety of relationships, space and opportunities with the intention of having an educational influence in learning. I agree with Whitehead (2009) that not all learning is educational and for me to believe I have had an educational influence I need to see that a particular type of learning has occurred. By educational influence I mean the

contribution I make to learning in the direction of my values with the best intent of the other/s in sharp focus.

I am using the notion of intent quite specifically. By 'best intent' I mean the values-based hope that is the fuel of living a loving, satisfying, productive, worthwhile life, which makes this a better world for us all. That is not the same as what may be in their 'best interest', which is to do with what might be best for an individual and may or may not include consideration for anyone else. It can be challenging to support the other to realise their best intent when it is not in their best interest. When Korczak went to Treblinka with the children in his care, against the advice of his friends, his actions were an expression of his best intent but as that led to certain death they were not in his best interest (Lifton, 1989).

For me to feel I have had an educational influence in the learning of a social formation I need to see some evidence that I have contributed to it developing in the direction of becoming a more humane society where humanity can flourish.

My practice is concerned with the development of relationships, space and opportunities for educational experiences. Educational experiences are those that enhance the possibilities of the learner coming into their own presence; to know the person they are and want to be and contribute to them developing their educational influence in learning.

As you read the rest of this section please bear in mind that I am not concerned with setting up discrete categories but rather to develop a structure that helps me decide where to focus my energies.

Some of the activities and events I organise offer the possibilities of learning adventures. Renzulli (1977) refers to these as type 1. They provide 'playgrounds' which broaden experience and allow for cognitive, personal, intellectual, social, emotional, physical experimentation. They broaden experience, allow learners to bump into and play with ideas, concepts, imaginative possibilities, to experiment with different personas and ways of doing things. All of which add to the palette of experiences to draw on when creating knowledge.

My thanks to Sonia Hutchinson and Paul Falkus for the notion of a learning adventure as distinct from a learning journey. There is movement in both but for me a journey has a recognisable destination whereas an adventure is open. Adventures and journeys are intimately inter-related. A journey has no purpose if not part of an adventure and an adventure makes no progress if there are no journeys. 'Outcomes' are intended to be a guide to providers and participants as to the nature of the 'playground for adventure and experimental journeys' being offered.

In 1998 I developed a programme of Saturday workshops for children and young people in response to my question – how do I know what I want to do if I don't know what I want to do? I wanted to give them a taste of themselves as forensic scientists, artists, jugglers, engineers... I lay out my rationale more fully in 'The Elasticated Learner and the purpose of beyond curriculum learning opportunities in a Local Education Authority' (Huxtable, 2006).

The programme offers possibilities, which are beyond those an individual institution or school cluster can offer. In running them I am continually challenged to improve my understanding of what distinguishes these workshops from others and the nature of the educational influence in learning that participants experience.

I have offered various conferences and events for educators over the years with the same intention, that of offering a broad palette of experiences, which they might draw on to enhance their practice. As I see children, young people and educators enjoying and learning from the experience I hear them asking how they can extend their developing expertise, which leads me to the next area of work focused on enhancing the acquisition and mastery of knowledge, skills, understandings and concepts.

The area of instruction may be that addressed in the given academic curriculum of a school or higher education institution, or less defined areas such as social skills, philosophical

enquiry, research, running a business or lecturing. Renzuli (ibid) refers to these as type 2. These courses, workshops, seminars, master-classes and the like have predetermined learning outcomes and provide the tools and underpinnings for creating knowledge.

I became increasingly aware as I developed my work that there were few opportunities for children and young people to create and offer valued knowledge. Similarly there were few opportunities for adults to extend their abilities as knowledge creators through disciplined enquiry. Renzuli (ibid) describes these as type 3, characterised as opportunities for creating and offering knowledge of the world, in an area of personal interest, through disciplined enquiry and within a time frame. Here I want to go beyond Renzuli and say that if there is little time and support for children, young people and educators to create knowledge of the world there is even less for them to create knowledge of themselves, and knowledge of themselves in and of the world.

Knowledge created of self, and self in and of the world, is not something that can be accomplished as a quick fix; it is life-long. The relationships, space and opportunities to support the venture are educational and complex. The learning is not shallow, which is often a characteristic of a lot of the learning required by an institution, but is deep and profound. West-Burnham (2010) gives a nice description of the distinction and what is entailed, in his work on 'learning to lead':

Shallow learning about the process of change would result in a formulaic presentation of the various academic models, the ability to describe personal experiences of change, engagement in the process because of external imperatives and an uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of the process.

Deep learning in this context is manifested in the ability to develop a personal model of the change process which is a synthesis of a range of sources and the ability to translate that model into action.

Experience is mediated through reflection, which allows for personal interpretation and a sense of autonomy.

Profound learning however results in the creation of personal meaning, integrating principle, values and practice so that behaviour is intuitive and the response to change is creative, challenging, ethically driven and integrative.

Where living theory research enables us to go beyond the notion of 'profound learning', is the effort the researcher makes to create and offer knowledge that explicates, articulates and communicates beyond the moment, what is described by West-Burnham as 'intuitive'.

a) Creating valued knowledge of the world

There exists an intimate inter-relationship between the knowledge created of the world, knowledge of self, and knowledge of self in and of the world. Adults may begin their enquiries with a question such as 'how can I improve what I am doing?' Children and young people may begin their enquiries with a desire to know more about something they are becoming interested in or passionate about. There are numerous examples of children and young people as researchers, with adults having various reasons for providing them support and opportunity. For instance, the Open University's Student Research Centre (childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk) teaches young people how to carry out research so they can carry out their own studies on matters that are important and meaningful to them.

Many teachers have used TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) (Wallace and Adams, 1993) since I asked Belle Wallace to run courses locally. Some have used it to enable their pupils to learn to develop their own enquiries; some have extended their use of TASC to engage the pupils in the given curriculum.



Children, young people and adults can use TASC to generate knowledge through an action research approach. This diagrammatic representation of TASC is attractive, neat and usually displayed in colour. However, I agree with the young children working with Joy Mounter that it does not communicate the multidimensional, interrelated flow that is the actuality of their learning. They used colour to show the flow and the eruption of learning, the knowledge created, up through the centre, the heart of the enterprise, to shower sparks on what is in the present and future.

b) Creating valued knowledge of self

There are many reasons to 'Know thy self!' Here I am concerned with the knowledge created of self as an educational gift that enhances my ability to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for others and myself. Joy Mounter (Mounter, 2007) shows her young pupils understanding the value of knowing self, the relational dynamic between creating knowledge of the world and creating knowledge of self. This where she describes the learning theory the children co-created and some of their explanation:

Children's Learning Theory

The starting point was the form of the TASC Wheel and the letters standing for different words. The children began discussing ideas for a special word to call their theory. Child 'A' quickly came up with 'QUIFF' and the children liked the sound of the

word. The next step for them was deciding what each letter should stand for. They talked together around the circle sharing ideas whilst I acted as scribe on the whiteboard. The process from start to finish including thinking of the word and what each letter meant only took half an hour, this was with the agreement of all the children.

Q questions
U understanding
I I am important
F feelings
F focus

The discussion was focused, there were no disagreements about what each letter should stand for. Children of all abilities shared ideas and added detail to the ideas. The whole class are really pleased with their initial idea and then wanted time to think about it before adding more detail behind QUIFF. This point of reflecting and coming back to the task was their own idea and seemed to give all of the children time to come up with strong ideas and have a lot to share when they came back together.

Child D quickly pointed out the following day that the 'I' he had thought of for 'I am important' is in the middle of the word, just like we are in the middle of our learning. Child A is confident all aspects of learning are in QUIFF because we control the type of learner we are with how we are feeling or believe we have learned about ourselves. Please see appendix one for details of their thinking behind QUIFF.

The children like the physical representation of QUIFF as a wheel and wanted a visual picture of QUIFF. In this picture by child A, The pyramid represents our learning. The base is 'Q' questions, base of all learning and the widest part of our learning pyramid. Our focus helps us answer those questions, persevere, which appears like an egg floating in the questions. Another child explained how they had put an eye at the top of the pyramid because we are most important and stop or let all of the learning happen. Child B explained how he had put knowledge of 'things' as he called them in the triangle, but of himself higher because that is more important and harder to learn about. The whole picture is surrounded by a rainbow as that provides the skills for us to learn'. (p.13)

In living theory research the researcher often starts or comes to a point where they need to produce an autobiographical account of important events/moments/experiences that they believe explain why what they are doing is important to them. The purpose is to help them understand what it is that motivates them to do what they do and where their motivation comes from. This helps them to come to understand themselves in and of the world better and research their practice to live their values more fully, to their own benefit and that of others.

c) Creating valued knowledge of self in and of the world in living boundaries

Many examples of living theory researchers creating knowledge of self in and of the world and the influence this has had in enabling them to enhance their educational influence can be found on <http://www.actionresearch.net>

Joy's pupils show how they are beginning to offer a loving recognition of self, establish respectful connectedness with others and express an educational responsibility in the living boundaries between them. In the video of Sally Cartwright (Cartwright, 2008) and her students talking to the 14-19 strategy managers there is another illustration. As their presentation was videoed it is possible for you to experience something of the relationally dynamic qualities of the relationships and space.

This is a 4:03 clip (3) where they introduce what they have been doing which you can access from <http://tinyurl.com/lc9q52> I invite you to watch and attend not only to what is said but the intonation, the movement between the students and sense the quality of how you experience the knowledge they are creating of themselves in and of the world. I believe there

is evidence of them beginning to show a loving recognition of themselves and others, extend a respectful connectedness and express an educational responsibility.

As an educator concerned with enhancing the educational contexts for children and young people I want, amongst other things, to enhance contexts that encourage them to explore themselves and create knowledge of themselves in and of the world, which will enable them to live not just a productive life but one that is also loving, satisfying and worthwhile. A further example is offered by Bogna and Zovko (2008) where they show children researching what is important to them within the boundary constituted by home and school.

This clearly reflects living theory and Whitehead's desire to make the embodied knowledge of educators public. I want the same for *all* persons, irrespective of age and passion. I cannot isolate my concern to 0 -19 year olds; they live and learn in a complex ecology shaped by themselves and adults. The quality of educational relationships, space and opportunities adults create and sustain for children and young people I believe depends on the quality of their own educational influence in their own learning. Hence my efforts to engage educators in researching their own practice to create knowledge they value of the world, themselves, and themselves in and of the world.

An example of this work is describe in Creativity|WORKS (by Andrew Henon and downloadable from <http://www.nesacreativechange.org.uk/creativity.php>) Andrew Henon (socially engaged artist), Karen Drews (photographer) and I worked with Gill Kenny (class teacher), Gill's colleagues and Head teacher, and Gill's 7 year old pupils in a collaborative, creative enquiry for artists (p.45):

'The sessions had two aims; to provide an opportunity for children and adults to experience themselves as artists, collaboratively developing talents with an artist, and second, to provide an opportunity for them to develop their talents as researchers creating, offering and accepting gifts of knowledge of themselves and the world.'

The educational space was created in the boundaries between worlds of classroom, socially engaged art and living research, between teachers and learners and educational researchers, between the individual and community.

I wanted to share this venture as it was within a school and with a whole class of young children. As the children and adults create knowledge of the world and of themselves, in the living boundaries between them I believe the children have an opportunity to create knowledge of themselves in and of their world. The educational relationships, space and opportunities that support and sustain the sparks ignited in those moments are complex, relationally dynamic and multidimensional and require us to go beyond West-Burnham's notion of profound learning I refer to above. I believe enabling learners and educators to collaborate and communicate their living theory praxis can contribute to enhancing the educational experience of all.

4. A relationally dynamic and multidimensional research approach

In bringing TASC (Wallace et al, 2004) and a living theory approach to action research (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) together I sought to develop a research approach that:

- Holds together the organic and systematic phases of living research in a relationally dynamic multidimensional manner;
- Connects research to create knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world, to enhance understandings of self and clarify ontological values which form the researchers' living standards of judgement and explanatory principles of their practice as they endeavour to live a loving, satisfying and productive life, which is worthwhile.

Often these seem to be separated despite the erudition of people like Medawar (1969). For simplicity of reference I call this living theory TASC.

While there is no one starting place in reality, there has to be for communication, which is necessarily linear. I am aware that as I write words I am doing so with my lifetime of experience that embraces my head, heart and body, and you are reading them with your own. 'A picture is worth a 1,000 words' as the well-known saying goes so while I can not add a picture I can offer you video to enhance the possibility of what you experience coming a little closer to mine.

We see what we look for so the way I create images of my reality helps to form it. In trying to describe a living research process I need to use a variety of devices, which help to hold ghosts and whispers together with points of sharp focus to enhance our communication and sharing understanding. These devices include words as text in various forms, poetic, narrative, SHOUTING etc. metaphors, photos, picture, drawings, video and so on. The devices of representation themselves are an integral part of the research method and methodology and influence what is researched.

I go through two phases in researching – and research to me is about trying to make sense of my worlds in a way that is generative and transformational for me and contributes generative and transformational possibilities for others.

Research is often thought of as starting with 'exploration', laying out what is already known. I would like to take Whitehead's ideas of values and embodied living educational theory being revealed through researching practice and suggest a starting place of 'learning from experience'. As I reflect over what has been I ask myself questions such as:

What have I learnt about my values, myself, my passions?

What skills and understandings have I extended?

What talents have I developed and which do I need to develop?

How does what I have learnt connect with other ideas?

What knowledge have I created that I value?

How have I affected others?

How have I contributed to and benefited from my own learning and the learning of others?

What are my embodied educational theories and beliefs?

What do I want to explore now?

The question to be addressed through the research is often not known at the beginning and only emerges as the research proceeds. The metaphor I like is that created by Louise Cripps of an art exhibition. As I have understood it an artist forms various art pieces, sometimes to a commission, sometimes as an exploration of a different use of material and tools, sometimes just from idly playing with material or in response to having seen other artists work or as a result of thoughts emerging from conversations or events. Not all pieces are finished or perfected. I have a picture in my head of a room cluttered with clay and canvas, books spilling off shelves, and balanced in precarious towers on the floor in a sea of papers. Then the possibilities of an exhibition emerge and a systematic phase of research is embarked on.

Starting by standing outside the self and looking at what is strewn around the room created in the act of living. In communicating to and with myself and others to make sense of the organic flow of the adventure and journeys I have been on I begin to understand what I have been doing – I begin to form an explanation emerging from as yet undescribed events. I am seeking to understand and theorise not only the knowledge of the world I have created but to understand myself – the world within, and myself in and of the world. What are my values that explain why creating and offering knowledge has been important to me? What do I

understand about my self? What do I understand about the world I want to bring into being by being in the world?

I recognise that a key to living theory TASC lies in the sections, 'communicate' to and with others, and 'what have I learnt?'. Whitehead points to the same place in the process when he says that it is often the last thing that is written that is the point that needs to be brought to the front. You don't know what you have done until you have done it. The act of reappraising is not just a cognitive activity; reappraisal to enhance my educational influence involves heart and body as well as head. It is an act of extending self a loving recognition, developing respectful connectedness within self and expressing an educational responsibility towards and for self.

This sounds odd – respectful connectedness within self. I am aware of those boundaries within others, the intra-personal worlds, and try not to inadvertently 'lean on the doors of others they don't want opened'. There are boundaries between, for instance, private, personal, public, professional inter-personal worlds. They are fluid, ill defined, culturally influenced if not determined, but recognisable particularly when transgressed.

There are also internal places around which I know I have constructed boundaries to help me deal with experiences, which may for instance be painful or damaging. A lot of psychotherapeutic theory and practice is built on such a premise.

As I reflect on what I have learned through my enquiry I do so with a growing awareness of being respectful of my own boundaries, those between me and other worlds, and those within me, and the generative transformational possibilities of acting within the boundaries while not violating them. A loving recognition is appreciative and respectful of those boundaries while offering opportunities within them for creating knowledge of self, and self in and of the world, which hold generative, transformational and life-enhancing possibilities for the places that form the boundaries.

5. Conclusion

I have shown what I mean by my living theory praxis, which necessarily includes not just my theory of education but also my living educational theory, in recognition and full expression of phronesis as the core of my praxis as a professional educator. I believe it is in the creation of knowledge of self in and of the world within living boundaries as an integral process in the creation of knowledge of self and of the world that a person's living theory is created. In that creation the individual enhances their own educational influence in learning and the contribution they make to their own wellbeing and well-becoming and that of others. I would very much like to hear from other educators seeking to develop educational relationships, space and opportunities for children, young people and adults to collaboratively enquire and offer the knowledge they create and offer within boundaries as gifts to make this a better world to be.

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Appendix

Video clips

These clips are accessible from YouTube. They are not staged or even arranged with a thought for the quality of the video in documentary tradition. You may need to turn the sound up on YouTube and your computer to maximum to be able to hear some of what is said.

1. What really matters to me. <http://tinyurl.com/3qz6sls>

This is 1min 28secs long and uploaded 11th May 2007. It was at the Tuesday evening Masters group session when we each said what really matters. The book I refer to is Shekerjian, D. (1990) *Uncommon Genius: How Great Ideas are Born. Tracing the Creative Impulse with Forty Winners of the MacArthur Award*. London: Penguin.) This is an extract:

'There's a quote by Denise Its from Uncommon Genius.... She came to the conclusion that everyone has an aptitude for something and the trick is to recognise it, honour it, and work with it. When I came across this some time back It really made me think because I think as an educator we spend an awful lot of time trying to tell other people what we recognise in them: What we honour, what we want them to work with rather than ourselves, what is it that you are going to recognise... how can I help you recognise what it is that you actually really want to work with, to really value. (I like that distinction between value and valued.) What is it that is of value within them selves and how can I contribute towards the circumstances that enable them to work with them....'

2. An embodied expression and articulation of my ontological values. <http://tinyurl.com/3f5ff7a>

This is 4 mins 8 secs long and uploaded 13th September 2008. It is an annotated part of my presentation of a paper at the BERA 2008 annual conference where I articulate my ontological values. This is an extract:

'... loving recognition of the other... respectful connectedness.... respectful of those boundaries... expression of my educational responsibility towards the other... not for the other but towards the other... how can I actually understand what it is that you want to actually create and offer and how can I help you live that as completely as possible...'

3. Young people sharing their experience of educational research.

<http://tinyurl.com/lc9g52>

This is 4mins 3secs long and uploaded 8th February 2009. It is the introduction to a 20-minute presentation to 14-19 strategy managers by students working on their AS Extended Projects. The first two students who speak had been part of the pilot group so had experience of the whole process of working with their teacher, Sally Cartwright, and their research community. The others are part way through. The whole presentation is on 4 video clips of about 5 minutes each. It gives an insight into the experience of students and their teacher researching as living theory researchers to create knowledge of the world and in the process come to create knowledge of them selves and them selves in and of the world. These are the other three clips.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A15kuNAppfM&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5fu4FOvO48&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFfgSCoxKgk&feature=related>