

How does a Living Theory research approach to Action Research enhance the understanding, development and integration of personal, professional and political collaborative practice as a contribution to the flourishing of humanity?

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Abstract

This paper is offered as a contribution to the celebration of the 40th anniversary of CARN (Collaborative Action Research Network). In the process of creating it I developed my understanding and practice of Living Theory research as a multidimensional and relationally dynamic collaborative form of research, where collaboration is an expression of embodied meanings of 'i am because we are' together with 'we are because i am', represented as i~we~i. I present an argument concerning Living Theory research as a form of research that enables me to integrate my personal, professional and political collaborative educational practice.

As the members of the conference are particularly interested in Action Research I summarise my developing understanding and practice of Living Theory research with reference to Living Theory TASC. Living Theory TASC is a synthesis of a Living Theory research approach to Action Research and TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context), a form of Action Research devised by Wallace (Wallace & Adams, 1993). The account is in the form of a multimedia narrative to communicate my ontological and relational values and collaborative educational practice and research, which constitute my evolving educational knowledge as a contribution to the flourishing of humanity.

Introduction

Through creating this paper I have extended my understanding and practice of Living Theory research as a process that has enabled me to improve my understanding, development and integration of my personal, professional and political collaborative practice as an educational practitioner. As you engage with this multimedia narrative I ask you to keep the following questions in mind to help me test this claim.

- Do I present here educational research...that is worthy of publication?
- Is my story understandable? Do you know what I have done, why I have done what I have done and how I hold myself to account?
- Is my story believable? Do I provide enough evidence to support my claims to know my practice and that I do seek to live as fully as I can the values that give meaning and purpose to my life?
- Are my educational values and the normative contexts of my work clear?
- Do I offer a well-reasoned and reasonable explanation of why I do what I do?

- In reading this account, has your imagination been stimulated and have those thoughts contributed anything to your educational journey as you seek to improve your educational contexts and relationships? (Huxtable, 2012, pp.43-44)

As this account is presented at CARN's 40th anniversary I also want to add:

- Is anything I offer here of interest to you as a member of the Collaborative Action Research Network developing your educational research and collaboratively?

I begin this paper with details of some of the background of my work. As you may not be familiar with Living Theory research I then briefly describe what it is and some of the confusions. I go on to show how Living Theory research enables the authentic integration of research into personal, professional, political educational practice with examples from past and present practice. Finally I present an argument that Living Theory research is a multidimensional and relationally dynamic form of collaboration as an expression of *i~we~i*, that generates educational knowledge. As CARN members are particularly interested in collaborative forms of Action Research I illustrate with Living Theory TASC (Huxtable, 2012). Living Theory TASC is a synthesis of a Living Theory research approach to Action Research and TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context), a form of Action Research devised by Wallace (Wallace & Adams, 1993).

Background

In 2012 I successfully submitted my doctoral thesis (Huxtable, 2012) created in the process of researching my practice to improve it as a senior educational psychologist, responsible for implementing an *inclusive* (English) local authority policy on high ability learning. The project was known as APEX; all are Able Pupils EXtending opportunities. Details can be freely accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/apex/livinglegacies2012.pdf>. My practice was concerned with developing educational practice and provision to enhance each child's and young persons' abilities to learn to live loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile lives, for themselves and others. In the process of researching my educational practice to improve it I clarified my ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society, as they emerged within living-boundaries through the evolution of my living-theory praxis, to form explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in my claim to know my practice.

In 2012 changes in policy and practice demanded by central government meant my employment with the local authority was terminated and I had to develop new fields of practice. My fields of practice have changed but my concerns have not. My concerns were and are that: practice, theory and research often appear to lose connection with the educational purpose of education; theory and practice appear to be developed independently, and without explanation or evaluation related to

educational values; educational practitioners appear to practice in discrete worlds, each vying to exert their hegemony over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision.

Since the termination of my paid employment I have employed myself in new fields of practice and continued to research as a Living Theory researcher (Whitehead, 1989a). A summary can be accessed from the home page of living-posters.



Figure 1. Home page of living-posters – access from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage061115.pdf>

Living Theory research enables me to address my concerns by developing and integrating personal, professional and political educational practice that gives meaning and purpose to my work and life. The description and explanation of educational influences in learning is in the form of a multimedia narrative, which communicate the meanings better than text alone. I draw on data generated as I have researched my practice to improve it, to clarify my meaning of a multidimensional and relationally dynamic understanding of collaboration. These are expressions of embodied meanings of ‘i am because we are’ and ‘we are because i am’, represented as *i~we~i* (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2015)

Living Theory research, and living-educational-theory (living-theory)

The failure to clarify what is educational, as distinct from education defined by the target and ‘league tables’ driven ambitions of the English government, is expressed graphically in this letter from a Head teacher quoted by Ginnot (1972):

'Dear Teachers:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become more human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.' (p.137)

Ginott shows the importance of developing shared meanings of education that reflect life-affirming and life-enhancing values rather than just a superficial lexicon. Ginott's wife clarifies posthumously his meaning of education to 'help your students become more human:

'He wanted to learn how to discipline without humiliating; how to criticize without destroying self-worth; how to praise without judging; how to express anger without hurting; how to acknowledge, not argue with, feelings; how to respond so that children would learn to trust their inner reality and develop self-confidence.

"What is the goal of education?" he would ask, "When all is said and done, we want children to grow up to be decent human beings, a 'mensch', a person with compassion, commitment, and caring." (p.10)

Biesta (2006) alludes to something similar when he writes, 'Something has been lost in the shift from the language of education to the language of learning' (p.14) and argues that we need to develop an educational language. I agree. I understand meanings of what is educational to keep connection between an individual's learning to create knowledge of the world and knowledge to live their life-affirming and life-enhancing values. Values that Crompton (2010) refers to as intrinsic, which include, 'the value placed on a sense of community, affiliation to friends and family, and self-development.' (p.9).

Many in education establishments or organisations ignore the educational responsibility of those who work in them. This can be seen in Winch's (2013) paper where he answers his question, *What Kind of Occupation is Teaching?* He distinguishes between teacher as craftworker, executive technician and professional but makes no reference to the educational purpose of education or the contribution teachers might make as educational professionals to an educational knowledge base.

Not all those concerned with developing educational knowledge, research and practice work in early years, primary, secondary or higher education establishments. For instance, Robyn Pound, when a Health Visitor, shows in her thesis (Pound, 2003) how, as a Living Theory researcher, she develops knowledge of her educational practice of 'alongsidedness'. In awarding a doctorate the Academy legitimates Pound's living-theory as making an original and significant contribution to

educational knowledge. Living Theory research is a form of research that enables practitioners to research into their educational practice to improve it and contribute to the growth of an educational knowledge base irrespective of their field of practice.

I use capitals to distinguish Living Educational Theory research (often shortened to Living Theory research) from an individual's living-educational-theory (often shortened to living-theory). I understand Living Theory research to be a distinct genre and methodology that enables a researcher to research into their educational practice to improve it, evolve their understanding of their values-based explanations (the why) of their educational influence as they work to improve their values-based practice, and contribute to the growth of an educational knowledge base. I understand my living-theory as the educational knowledge I create and offer.

Living Theory research is a form of self-study educational practitioner-research. The purpose of Living Theory research is for the researcher to develop, test and share educational knowledge of their personal, professional and political practice that holds the hope of contributing to the development a world in which humanity can flourish, in the process of enquiring into their field/discipline practice to improve it. By researching field/discipline practice to improve it *and* create an explanation of their educational influence in learning, the individual does not see a division between their different fields of practice and does not see himself or herself as a person existing or acting in isolation. Rather they recognise the multidimensional, relationally dynamic nature of the complex social, historical and cultural ecologies they are part of.

A living-educational-theory account includes a description and values-based explanation by an individual or their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations within which they live and work (Whitehead, 1989a). The researcher's values, clarified as they emerge in the course of the research, form the explanatory principles and standards of judgement of the researcher's educational practice. My living-theory is my values-based explanation of why I have sought to bring about change and the nature of the change I am trying to make with the hope of contributing to the flourishing of humanity.

Whitehead originated Living Theory research and living-educational-theories, so I want to offer you his words to clarify what is meant by *a* living-theory (I have hyphenated living-theory to be consistent with the way it is written in this paper):

'I use the idea of [living-theories] (Whitehead, 1989) to distinguish the explanations of action researchers from the general explanations in propositional theories that dominate the refereed international journals. I am thinking particularly of [living-theories] that are constituted by the unique explanations of action researchers of their educational influences in learning. In propositional theories, explanations for the actions and learnings of individuals are derived from conceptual abstractions of relations between propositions. In [living-theories] individuals generate their own explanations

of their educational influences in their own learning. The explanatory principles in [living-theory] explanations are energy-flowing values embodied and expressed in practice.' (Whitehead, 2009, pp.85-86)

Thanks to the ambiguity of the English language 'living theory' can be understood to have different meanings and it is this that has led to confusion and misunderstanding, as can be seen from this extract from McNiff's (2013) recent writings:

'... Whitehead has aimed to develop a form of theory different from traditional propositional forms... he calls this living theory'. I have always seen the term as a verb more than noun — i.e. theory is something you do and live (not an unusual idea in the literatures; see also Chomsky's idea of 'I-theories' below) — and I have actively supported it, from my perspective that practitioners live their own theories of practice through the way they conduct the practice and explain how they do so. If 'theory' is about offering descriptions and explanation for a practice, practitioners' explanations for how and why they practise as they do constitute their personal theories of practice, and these theories are dynamic, living and transformational. My support for the idea even extended to my writing a book and putting Jack's name as first author to honour his contributions to the field, although the book you are reading moves beyond the ideas explored there.

However, I have become increasingly concerned that the original idea of 'living theory' (as a practical form of action) seems to have become reified into 'Living Theory' (as a proper noun denoting a movement). This change can be confusing for practitioners. A teacher once asked me at a workshop, 'What is the difference between "living theory" and "action research"?' (this may have been 'Living Theory'). The idea of 'Living Theory' as a reified object presents the theory as something separate from the practice. Once again, 'theory' becomes an object of study rather than a living practice, and the reification of the term potentially denies the very principles and values that inspired it. So since about 2010 I have distanced myself from this form of language.

Since the 1970s Whitehead has aimed to have this form of theory legitimated by the Academy, so the focus of the work has now shifted from legitimation for the form of theory to securing influence at world level. (p.65)

As McNiff points out 'living theory' can be interpreted to mean different things. She talks of 'living theory' simply as a theory that is living, living in the sense of evolving. Living theory can also be taken to mean people are doing the living and they are living theory as a form of practice. What she does not clarify is 'living-theory' (often truncated from living-educational-theory) as a term Whitehead (1989) coined to mean a valid values-based explanation created by a practitioner-researcher of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in. All living-theories are living, that is evolving; and all living-theories are lived, that is they are expressions of the

embodied values of the researcher who is living their life and practice, but, not all living theories are living-theories!

I have used a hyphen to clearly identify living-theory as a noun with an explicit meaning. McNiff does not refer to living-theory or Living Theory research and so does not go beyond it as she claims. Living Theory research far from separating theory, practice and values, brings them together to form generative and transformational praxis with a moral intent. I began to address this in my thesis in 2012 and will leave further discussion for another paper. I do agree with McNiff that Living Theory research is in the process of becoming a movement and Whitehead's focus has shifted from simply enabling living-theories to be legitimated by the Academy to also securing influence of Living Theory research at world level to enhance the contribution it can make to the flourishing of humanity.

Researching personal, professional, political educational practice collaboratively

I have come to appreciate what Living Theory research offers a practitioner-researcher researching their educational practice to improve in the process of researching to create field/discipline knowledge or practice.

Personal

Living Theory research is a form of self-study. The purpose of this form of self-study is not vanity but one that enables the researcher to hold them self to account to live the values that give their life and work meaning and purpose as fully as possible. The self is not in isolation, self-serving but one that is both an expression of the unique individuality of each person's self and their relational self. This was first represented as i~we by Whitehead and Huxtable (2006). More recently the notion of 'i am because we are' which came from Ubuntu, has been extended to integrate understanding of, 'we are because i am' as represented by i~we~i (Whitehead and Huxtable, 2015) The collaborating individuals and the collective they are part of create a living-boundary (Huxtable, 2012) between them, which is a trusting, co-creative, multidimensional, relationally dynamic space.

I use 'i' to stand for the individual – that is me, you and all those other individuals that comprise the 'we'. It stands for the 'i' that is not only trying to contribute to the flourishing of humanity by living a loving, productive and worthwhile life as judged by the individual, where their values form their explanatory principles and standards of judgment, but also an 'i' who is seeking to extend their love to themselves as well as others as a worthwhile productive person living a life that is satisfying.

I was having a conversation with Robyn Pound about how I might improve my research supervision. Robyn at the time was a Health Visitor in the UK, a Living Theory researcher and an Adlerian practitioner. What she has said is very relevant here:

'Any research method that supports the development/confident unification of your 'i' with your 'I' will help answer your question...' (personal communication 17th May 2015)

This is in the context of the problem I was talking to Robyn about - we had been talking about the relationship between the 'I' (standing for the egotistical self which usually wants to be recognised) and the 'i', (standing for the ontological and relational self, which quite often doesn't want to be recognised) and the problem of holding them together rather than one or the other being subordinated; how to hold them together in a productive harmony that feels satisfying. I will use 'i~I' here to represent the complex intra personal worlds I embody with the living-boundary between. Like many I know I have tried to suppress my 'I' and subordinate it to my 'i'. I recognise myself as a living contradiction as I want other people to recognise, value and work with both their 'I' and 'i'.

I agree with Biesta (2006) when he said:

'... education is not just about the transmission of knowledge, skills and values, but is concerned with the individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their "coming into the world" as unique, singular beings.' (p. 27)

But there is something more that is required, something to do with an appreciative recognition by self and others. Fukuyama says it eloquently:

Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of anger, shame and pride, are parts of the human personality critical to political life. According to Hegel, they are what drives the whole historical process. (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xvii)

Crompton recognises that an individual can be a living contradiction trying to live apparently conflicting values:

'A person's values comprise an integrated and dynamic system, such that activating one particular value affects other values (activating compatible values and suppressing opposing values).

Simplified, the work presented here on values points to a distinction between two broad classes of value: intrinsic or self-transcendent values, and extrinsic or self-enhancing values [Section 2.1 and Appendix 1]. Intrinsic values include the value placed on a sense of community, affiliation to friends and family, and self-development. Extrinsic values, on the other hand, are values that are contingent upon the perceptions of others – they relate to envy of 'higher' social strata, admiration of material wealth, or power. (p.9-10)

But somehow these don't communicate the value of the unique, living person, which is where the following comes in. The version of the story of Zusha that Barry Hymer gave in his thesis. Barry wrote:

'I can relate to the old Hassidic story, as told by Reb Zusha: "When I die and come before the heavenly court, if they ask me, 'Zusha, why were you not Abraham?' I'll say that I didn't have Abraham's intellectual abilities. If they

say, 'Why were you not Moses?' I'll say I didn't have Moses' leadership abilities. For every such question, I'll have an answer. But if they say, 'Zusha, why were you not Zusha?' for that, I'll have no answer."¹

Barry (Hymer, 2007) shows how creating his living-theory thesis enables him to recognise, value and work to enhance his and other people's unique contributions to the flourishing of humanity. As he draws on the knowledge created and shared by others (of all ages) through the literature and their ways of being in the world he shows i~we~i as collaboration and integral to Living Theory research.

As I have said educational practice is not simply about what happens in 'education' establishments, whether school, college or university. Many engage as educational practitioners while their overt practice is that which can be identified by a field or discipline such as Health Visitor, Dance and Movement Therapist, Executive of a Carers Service, Mathematician, Engineer, Teacher, Lecturer, Parent or... as can be seen from this extract from a recount Robyn Pound created as part of a report on the progress of Moving on Up for the Lottery Fund.

Moving On Up is a collaborative venture between Bath and North East Somerset Council's Sport and Active Lifestyles Team, Make a Move charity, Sirona's Health Visiting Team, Percy Crèche Services and parents to tackle postnatal depression (PND) through movement and exercise. The project is Lottery Funded for three years. Michelle Rochester and Sarah Haddow offer a series of sessions of guided movement to reduce postnatal low mood. Robyn Pound as Health Visitor has supported many of the mothers to participate. This gives only a very limited indication of their roles but will suffice to give you a background; further details can be accessed from with details accessible from <http://www.makeamove.org.uk/projects/with-mums/>.

Michelle, Sarah and Robyn are the core of the project research group and invited me to help keep them focussed on researching their practice to generate educational knowledge which contributes to an awareness of the bond between BODY and MIND, inspires laughter, encourages a sense of fun and promotes happiness. As you will see on the website there is plenty of evidence to support the claim that the project is making a difference but there is do data to enable us to understand or explain what Michelle, Sarah and Robyn are doing that contributes to making a difference. It was not ethically possible to collect visual data of the sessions but the Robyn was able to video Michelle and Sarah expressing their embodied knowledge through dance. With this data we can get closer to understanding and communicating a multidimensional and relationally dynamic understanding of collaboration, which is an expression of embodied meanings of 'i am because we are' together with 'we are because i am', represented as i~we~i.

¹ This story is recounted in <http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/quotes.htm>, retrieved on 6 June 2006

**Sarah and Michelle analyse their relationship
using a video of them dancing together**

September 2016

After a *Moving on Up* session in July 2014, which posed questions about how we handled a particularly unwell group of women, Sarah and Michelle expressed themselves by dancing together. Looking at this last of the three videos again in 2016, they look for evidence of how they relate together to find clues about how they work.

Marie asks questions which stimulate the timed assessment below:

<https://youtu.be/L7vQd1DKkXM>



The video they are analysing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyb1Eq-xGWU&feature=youtu.be>

		Sarah	Michelle
0.02		0.06 Michelle isn't quite ready to begin and I'm moving slowly, in this moment it represents a moment of suspense, I could have begun moving while Michelle was sorting out her jumper. Instead I begun moving slowly, and making a clear point that I am not going to move too quickly so you cant catch up, I'm moving but I am still waiting, is this a slight representation of how our working relationships works, in that I wont move on until she is ready, so that we begin this together yet still clearly individuals in the space.	0.04 M sees S and mirrors and takes the lead from S
0.06			



Figure 2. Screen shot of video at 1.44

I wrote to Michelle, Sarah and Robyn:

At 1.44 and 1.57 I see you expressing the pleasure and fun of what you created between you in the living-boundary you have formed between you. A living-boundary is a safe, co-creative space that is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. You both identify the relationally dynamic quality of your collaboration but what you don't identify here, but you do elsewhere, is the multidimensional knowledge of self and other you bring into the space here. You know each other well over many years in different ways. You acknowledge elsewhere the educational influence you have had, and continue to have in your own learning and that of each other, and the other's educational influence in your learning, which I believe contributes to what I see you doing here. I may be mistaken but what I see is a physical expression of what I mean by, 'collaboration that is multidimensional and relationally dynamic and enhances our ability to research 'the personal, the political, the professional, and the practice' in a way that is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian.' I think this communicates something of what you do in MoU. I see a trusting, co-creative space I believe you create through your practice that you invite the mums into. I think you express your educational responsibility towards them by developing a space they can feel safe in, they can trust in, and in that space enter a dimension they are not familiar with, a dimension created by movement rather than words, where they can explore different ways of knowing themselves and their relationship with others. As 'educator' with an educational responsibility I have heard how you are careful to keep your personal problems out of the space you create for the mums, but bring aspects of your 'self' into the space that humanizes it.

Robyn (who caught the occasion on video) responded to Michelle and Sarah's analysis and added photos of the moments they reflect on:

It is beautiful to put these interpretations together with the film. I have watched and read both your interpretations and looked at what you each said about the same clips. There is such synergy in your interpretations. I got so much more from watching you than I have before, now I have dried my eyes. Love it! It has got to be useful in helping us understand what is going on in the room now that you have done this. It would be interesting if you did the same for the earlier clips where you noticed a different dynamic. Thank you both so much I really enjoyed watching you.

The reflections and learning by both Robyn and myself are not just formed by what we see in the video, we are informed by other times and contexts past, present and future. I hope I am beginning to communicate and evidence something of the multidimensional and relationally dynamic collaborative (i~we~i) nature of Living Theory research, which contributes to developing personal practice and their learning through critical and creative collaborative dialogue.

Professional

A key concern of a Living Theory researcher is to create and make public valid accounts of their living-theory research to contribute to the development of an educational knowledge base. In doing so the researcher is going beyond researching to improve 'personal practice' to contribute to improving 'professional practice' (Whitehead, 1989b; Whitehead & Huxtable, 2006; Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016)

There are different ways to understand 'professional', most often understood by remunerated employment. I argue here that practice can also be understood as professional even when someone is not paid to undertake a particular job. This is summarised by the Professional Standards Council established by the Australian state and territory governments:

<http://www.psc.gov.au/what-is-a-profession>

What is a profession?

The word "profession" means different things to different people. But at its core, it's meant to be an indicator of trust and expertise.

Traditionally, a "professional" was someone who derived their income from their expertise or specific talents, as opposed to a hobbyist or amateur. This still carries through to fields today, such as sport.

But given today's fast-changing environment of knowledge and expertise, it's now generally understood that simply deriving an income from a particular task might make you an "expert" or "good at your job" – but if you're a "professional", this has a broader meaning.

There's a long history of attempts to clarify this meaning, and to define the functions of professions. These attempts typically centralise around some sort of moral or ethical foundation within the practice of a specific and usually established expertise.

This section is designed to give you an insight into some of the historic and academic ways of defining professions, as well as some regulatory perspectives as to how a group can ultimately become a profession.

Key definitions

A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards. This group positions itself as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and is recognised by the public as such. A profession is also prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others¹.

A professional is a member of a profession. Professionals are governed by codes of ethics, and profess commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their expert domain. Professionals are accountable to those served and to society².

Professionalism comprises the personally held beliefs about one's own conduct as a professional. It's often linked to the upholding of the principles, laws, ethics and conventions of a profession as a way of practice.

Professionalisation is the pattern of how a profession develops³, as well as the process of becoming a profession.

1 Definition from Professions Australia

website <http://www.professions.com.au/about-us/what-is-a-professional>, accessed 11/06/15

2 Cruess, Sylvia R., Sharon Johnston, and Richard L. Cruess. "'Profession': a working definition for medical educators." *Teaching and learning in Medicine* 16.1 (2004): 74-76.

3 Abbott, A., 1988. *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

As I am researching my educational practice as a Living Theory researcher I believe I am behaving as a professional educational practitioner: I am holding myself to account to live values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing as fully as possible, and in making public valid accounts of my living-theory I also hold myself to account to those who also want to contribute to the flourishing of humanity, and contribute to an the growth of an educational knowledge base. As a Living Theory researcher I am not only researching to improve my personal and professional practice I am also

trying to offer my accounts of my living-theory with the hope of ‘securing influence at world level’ (McNiff, 2013) adding to the influence of Living Theory research as a social movement for the flourishing of humanity, which leads me to political practice.

Political

I am interpreting ‘political’ to relate to expressions of the ‘total complex of relations between people living in society’ (definition of ‘politics’ – Merriam-Webster online 5a).

I work with the assumption that those with whom I am ‘collaborating’ want to do so to contribute to the flourishing of humanity, both in terms of the flourishing of humanity as a species and the flourishing of a society expressing humanitarian values. I specifically include social or relational values, such as those of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society that I believe contribute to the flourishing of humanity. By inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian I mean:

- Inclusive – valuing the unique contributions each person develops and offers to enhance their own well-being and the collective
- Emancipating - each person accepting and expressing their responsibility to enhance their own learning and life and to contribute to that of others.
- Egalitarian – the individual is neither subservient nor dominant to another, or the collective but each exerts their power *with* others and self, to co-create

International Co-operative Alliance express values on <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles> that I see as consistent with these:

Co-operative values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

The International Co-operative Alliance also gives a definition of a ‘co-operative’

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

‘Co-operative’ and ‘collaborative’ in the literature are used interchangeably. This definition of a co-operative helps me connect the relationship between co-operating or collaborating individuals and groups with the expression of those values as political practice. Researching to improve educational influence in learning of social formations in which we live and work is similarly an expression of political practice.

Noffke (1997) criticises Living-Theory on the grounds that:

‘The process of personal transformation through the examination of practice and self-reflection may be a necessary part of social change, especially in education; it is however, not sufficient.’ (p. 329)

The generative and transformational influence a person has, through their way of being, on others and on social formations is however far more complex than Noffke suggests, as the paper by Fowler and Christakis (2008) on the ‘Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network’ demonstrates:

‘More generally, conceptions of health and concerns for the well-being of both individuals and populations are increasingly broadening to include diverse "quality of life" attributes, including happiness. Most important from our perspective is the recognition that people are embedded in social networks and that the health and well-being of one person affects the health and well-being of others. This fundamental fact of existence provides a conceptual justification for the specialty of public health. Human happiness is not merely the province of isolated individuals.’ (p.8)

Many living-educational-theories, as well as mine, include explanations of educational influence in the learning of socio-cultural formations and answer Noffke’s criticism by contributing to the development of personal, professional and political practice as illustrated by the living-theory doctoral thesis of Sadrud Din (Sadrudin Bahadur Qutoshi), *Creating Living-Educational-Theory: A Journey Towards Transformative Teacher Education In Pakistan*, accredited by Kathmandu University, Nepal, 2016 (Qutoshi, 2016).

A multidimensional and relationally dynamic form of collaboration (i~we~i)

As McNiff (2013) points out Living Theory research has been confused as just another form of Action Research. Living Theory research is a distinct genre, and methodology but there is not space to go into the distinction further here. As this paper is for CARN I focus on a Living Theory approach to Action Research to demonstrate Living Theory research as a multidimensional and relationally dynamic form of collaboration (i~we~i). Drawing on a Living Theory approach to Action Research (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) and Wallace’s TASC (Wallace and Adams, 1993) I bring these together into what I call Living Theory TASC.

This is the form of enquiry employing a Living Theory approach to Action Research on which I draw:

What is my concern?
Why am I concerned?
What am I going to do about it?
What data will I gather to help me to judge my effectiveness?
How does the data help me to clarify the meanings of my embodied values as these emerge in practice?
What values-based explanatory principles do I use to explain my educational influence?

How do I use my values-based standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of my claims to be improving my practice?
How will I strengthen the validity of my values-based explanations of my educational influences in learning?

The diagram below (Figure 3) shows the steps of enquiry of TASC



Figure 3. TASC wheel (Wallace et al., 2004)

The diagrammatic representation of TASC (Wallace et al., 2004) given above in Figure 2 is attractive, neat and colourful. However, Joy Mounter (2007) when teaching primary children and researching for her Masters introduced TASC to her 6-7 year old pupils. You can see the children critiquing it in the videos Joy has in the appendix to her Master's unit, *Understanding Learning and Learners assignment, Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?*

You can access the clip:
'What use is the TASC Wheel?'

at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH2-5xexbAQ> and you can access the clips:

'What do you think of the TASC Wheel?'

at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti4syOrIDdY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSqg1phEEaM>

I hope you will see what I am meaning by i~we~i as a form of collaboration. Joy and the three children each have a unique contribution to make to the development of their learning in the respectful, trustworthy creative space between them. Each values their own contribution and that of each other, not just the words they use but the embodied, tacit knowledge they bring into the space and work with co-creatively. They each take from what is created to inform their future learning.

The children later told Belle it does not communicate the multidimensional, interrelated flow that is the actuality of their learning. The children built a model (Figure 3) to communicate such a flow of energy. They used colour to show the flow, and represented the learning and knowledge created, erupting up through the centre, the heart of the enterprise, as a shower of sparks on what is in the present and future.



Figure 4 Joy Mounter's pupils' model of their learning (Mounter, 2007)

You may have to use your imagination more to understand the systematic aspect of living-theory TASC as a multidimensional zero-spiral knot illustrated in a 2D representation in Figure 5.

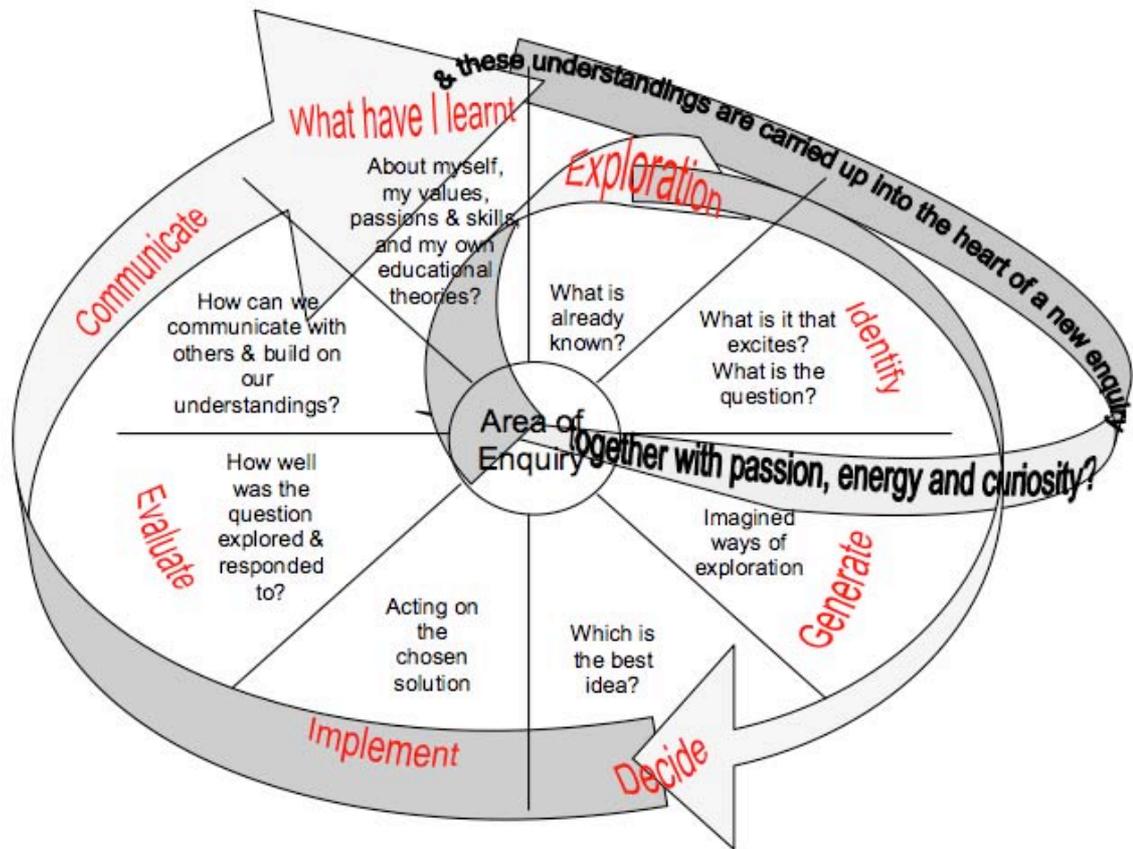


Figure 5 Living-Theory TASC Knot (Huxtable, 2008)

But Living Theory research constitutes far more than the systematic phase of enquiry. The stories in the narrative of improving practice to be told are arrived at through an organic process, birthed and evolved through flowing, complex interconnecting relationships and experiences, between learners and educators as they enquire together.

In the organic phase of Living Theory TASC I may at various times, or at the same time, be gathering and organising what is known in the field, implementing a plan of action, or clarifying my concern. I may use qualitative and quantitative methods developed by social scientists, and draw on theories and knowledge developed by academics and practitioners in various fields and disciplines. What I use and draw on is influenced by whether it helps me understand and improve what I am doing. In bringing TASC and Living Theory together, I sought to describe a research method that holds together the organic and systematic phases of educational research in a relationally-dynamic multidimensional manner and connects research to create knowledge of the world, with educational research to create knowledge of self and self in and of the world.

Living-Theory TASC is relationally-dynamic and multidimensional, within phases and between phases. In the systematic phase, the work does not go clockwise round the 'wheel', even when creating an account. This thesis is testament to what I mean. For instance, in the process of trying to produce an account that might communicate to you, I have organised and reorganised the material and reorganised it again as new learning emerges. Such an approach is also to be found in other disciplines, as illustrated by this reflection:

'I used to be a designer/engineer – you can't do that if you don't work iteratively. We also try and develop some of our IT systems in what we call a spiral fashion, tweaking and improving as we go along. Look at how Google rolls out new improvements, versus how Microsoft issues updates. I know which I prefer – iteratively.' (personal communication from Michael Neugarten, 12 November 2011)

Research is often thought by educators to start with 'exploration', laying out what is already known, or as TASC would have it, 'gather and organise'. I would like to take Whitehead's ideas of embodied values and living-educational-theory being revealed through researching practice to improve 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?

I am aware that I create stories about my life, which move from descriptions to explanations and shape the life I am living. The creation of a 'readerly text' as a form of account that communicates to others is part of the Living Theory research process.

Having considered 'communicating to and with others', and 'what I have learned', the understandings are carried up into the heart of the enquiry where the questions concerning what is of importance, and why, begin to emerge as the researcher connects with the anticipated audience of the account. The 'why' is an important question to pose and comes directly from the Living-Theory research process. I have seen the affect that posing that question has had on students. It deepened their

understanding not only of the discipline related enquiry but their understanding of themselves and how they want to be in the world. Examples can be found in the Masters assignments and doctoral theses on <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

I like the way TASC specifically identifies 'gather and organise knowledge'; knowledge created and offered by others and by self. This reminds me explicitly of the i~we~i relationship, and the value of gifts of knowledge offered by self and others, and the new knowledge generated in the process of organising what is known. The number of rewrites of this paper offers an example of what I mean here.

The next sections of Living Theory TASC are well explored and documented in work on TASC and a Living Theory approach to Action Research: what is the question/ what do I want to improve; imagining possibilities and selecting one; implementing and evaluating. The difference I want to stress is the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases. The circle at the top of the drawing shown below (Figure 6) represents the systematic phase with interconnections and with the organic phase represented beneath.

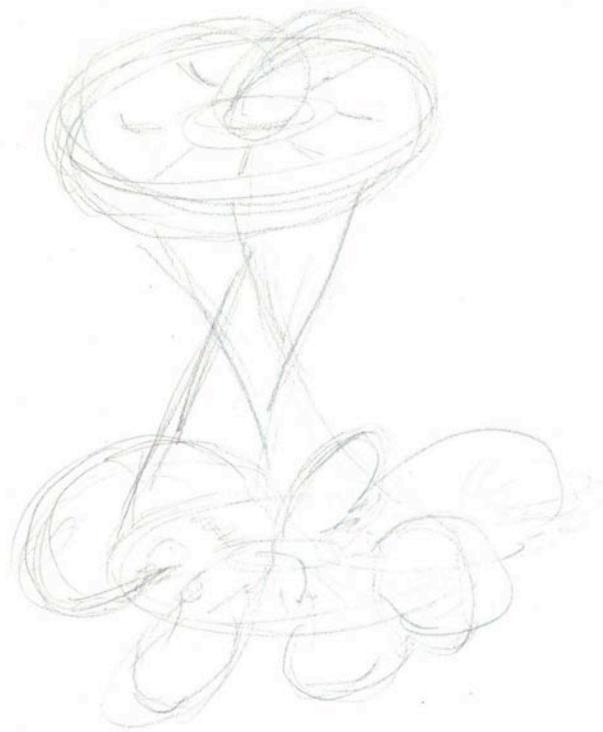


Figure 6. Inter-relationship between organic and systematic phases of research (Huxtable, 2012)

I am offering Living Theory TASC to show how researching educational practice does not stand apart from the creation of knowledge of the world. The researcher integrates their research to create knowledge of the world with that to create knowledge of themselves and themselves in and of the world, and learn what it might be for them to live a satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for themselves and others. The researcher also explicitly recognises the collaborative nature of

knowledge creation in living-boundaries between themselves and other/s as communicated by i~we~i

Summary

In this paper I have offered an account of how a Living Theory approach to Action Research enhances the integration, development and understanding of personal, professional and political practice as a contribution to the flourishing of humanity. I have shown how by developing my understandings in practice of Living Theory research I have kept practice, theory and research connected with the educational purpose of education; developed integrated theory and practice with explanation and evaluation related to educational values; shown how as an educational practitioner I have offered an explanation of the multidimensional and relationally dynamic relationships between apparently discrete worlds of practice, resisting the hegemony that some researchers attempt to exert over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision.

I have shown how Living Theory research enables me to integrate and contribute to personal, professional and political practice that gives meaning and purpose to my work and life and improve what I am doing in realising my values in action. I described and explained the development of my multidimensional and relationally dynamic understanding of collaboration, which is an expression of embodied meanings of 'i am because we are' together with 'we are because i am', represented as i~we~i, and use of Action Research.

Finally, I must ask, have I met the test of my claim and offered a multimedia narrative that has been of interest to members of the Collaborative Action Research Network and other practitioners developing their educational practice collaboratively during CARN's 40th anniversary?

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