

Developing emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational praxis through
Living Theory research in practice

Presented at ATEE conference 2017,

Changing Perspectives and Approaches in Contemporary Teaching,

23-25 Oct, Dubrovnik, Croatia

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Draft 201017

Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the clarification and development of educational praxis that is emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian, as an optimistic and hopeful response to the theme of the conference, 'Changing perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching'. A distinction will be made between two of the many purposes of an 'education system', and the resulting tensions and opportunities that teachers and learners can experience will be clarified. This is followed by a clarification of my meaning of educational praxis, as the integration of theory and practice with a moral intent. I will then, drawing on examples of teachers practicing in diverse cultures, briefly outline Living Theory research as a practical approach that enables a teacher to fulfil their responsibilities as a professional educational practitioner to research their practice to improve it and contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. A living-educational-theory (Whitehead, 1989) is an educational-practitioner's valid account of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations in which they work and live. I will show how, through continually researching and making public their living-educational theories, teachers can develop emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational practice responsive to the changing and complex demands they face, which addresses '... all forms of disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes, exclusion and marginalization'.

Key words: educational research, living-educational-theories, educational praxis

Subthemes: Enhancing the quality of teacher education

Mode of presentation: Interactive paper presentation

Introduction

In this paper I draw extensively on my doctoral research programme (Huxtable, 2012), which I embarked on and successfully completed while working for an English local authority. The insights I developed are particularly apposite in the context of this conference, as can be appreciated from the abstract to my thesis titled, 'How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?'

Thesis Abstract

My educational practice is concerned with enhancing children and young persons' abilities to learn to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life, for themselves and others. This thesis offers an original contribution to knowledge as a multimedia narrative. It communicates my ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society. I clarify meanings of my values, as they emerge 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.

Working as a senior educational psychologist responsible for implementing policy on high ability learning, I experienced the following concerns: Practice, theory and research often appeared to lose connection with the purpose of education; Theory and practice appeared to be developed independently, and without explanation or evaluation related to values of education; Those involved with education appeared to be in discrete worlds, each vying to exert their hegemony over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision.

Emerging from my research I offer four original ideas:

- 1) Living-Educational-Theory praxis, highlighting the fundamental importance of educators creating 'values-based explanation of their educational influences in learning' (Whitehead, 1989), as they research to develop praxis within living-boundaries.
- 2) Living-boundaries as co-creative space within which energy-flowing values can be clarified and communicated.
- 3) Inclusive gifted and talented education developed from an educational perspective, which enables each learner to develop and offer talents, expertise and knowledge as life-affirming and life-enhancing gifts. The knowledge is that created of the world, of self, and self in and of the world.
- 4) Living-Theory TASC, a relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis, which integrates Living-Theory (Whitehead, 1989) with Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC) (Wallace & Adams, 1993).

Although my sites of practice have changed (see <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/marie020617.pdf>) the insights I developed, which I draw heavily on here, are still evolving and I hope will be of interest to teachers concerned to develop emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational practice responsive to the changing and complex demands they face, which addresses '... all forms of disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes, exclusion and marginalization'

The focus of this paper is on the clarification and development of educational praxis that is emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian, as an optimistic and hopeful response to the theme of the conference, 'Changing perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching'. The paper is organised as follows:

- A distinction will be made between two of the many purposes of an education system, and the resulting tensions and opportunities that teachers and learners can experience will be clarified.
- I then clarify my meaning of educational praxis, as the integration of theory and practice with a moral intent.
- I give examples of teachers practicing in diverse cultures, briefly outline Living Theory research as a practical approach that enables a teacher to fulfil their responsibilities as a professional educational-practitioner to research their practice to improve it and contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.
- Examples are then given to show how, through continually researching and making public their living-educational theories, teachers can develop emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational practice responsive to the changing and complex demands they face, which addresses '... all forms of disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes, exclusion and marginalization'.
- Concluding thoughts

Two purposes of an education system, and tensions and opportunities that teachers and learners can experience

An educational system has many purposes contingent on the perspectives of the community it is intended to serve. Such perspectives change with the political climate and mores of society, which in turn influences perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching, and the expectations teachers and learners have of their respective roles and responsibilities.

Sachs (1999) describes the impact on educators and education in Australia of the ever-moving sands of an education system. She shows the influence of a shift from, what she refers to as, 'democratic professionalism', to 'managerialist professionalism' with the emergence of an 'entrepreneurial identify'. Her reference to experiences of New Zealand in the late 1980's serves to re-emphasise that the social and political upheaval and contradictions, I experience in England decades later, is not a new or local phenomenon.

I believe that you may experience something similar to me even though you may not live and work as I do in a small city in the south west of England. Since I began my professional career in an education system 'Governments' in my own country (Britain) and many others, have come and gone. Government policies

and strategies have come and gone. Government departments have come and gone, while others have repeatedly changed their names and functions. The constants are ever-increasing legislation, targets, constraints and contradictions. The British national government for example, irrespective of which one, has increasingly imposed practice, and actuarial forms of accountability on schools and local government, while at the same time expressing concern that education should enhance the well-being of the young and their ability to grow as contributing citizens to an inclusive democratic society. This has been to the detriment of practice to improve education as the British House of Lords acknowledged in 2009:

‘Able, brilliant and skilled professionals do not thrive in an environment where much of their energies are absorbed by the need to comply with a raft of detailed requirements...’(House of Lords, 2009, p.15)

The resulting damage is pointed to in the third report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Children, Schools and Families, which concluded:

‘The evidence we have received strongly favours the view that national tests do not serve all of the purposes for which they are, in fact used. The fact that the results of these tests are used for so many purposes, with high-stakes attached to the outcomes, creates tensions in the system leading to undesirable consequences, including distortion of the education experience of many children.’ (House of Commons Select committee, 2008, point 2. Conclusion and recommendations)

Nearly 10 years later Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, begins her discussion of findings from recent research she commissioned into the English primary and secondary curriculum by asking, ‘What do we understand to be the real substance of education?’ (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017>) However her understanding as to the purpose of education seems limited to the cost-effective transmission of a ‘given’ curriculum comprising knowledge created by others:

‘... at the very heart of education sits the vast accumulated wealth of human knowledge and what we choose to impart to the next generation: the curriculum.

Her concern appears to be to equip individuals with a wide grasp of knowledge beyond that which is examined but only in order to provide workers equipped to serve employers needs in their pursuit of ever increasing profits.

Reiss and White (2013) formulate an apparently similar question in their book with a tellingly title, ‘An Aims-based Curriculum: The Significance of Human Flourishing for Schools’, IOE Press. However, they are asking a far more fundamental question than Spielman as can be seen in their answer:

What are schools for? In very general terms, their aims are the same as those of a home with children. The task of both institutions is two-fold and simplicity itself, to equip each child:

- to lead a life that is personally flourishing,
- to help others to do so, too.

I believe that each teacher, as a professional educational-practitioner, should be prepared to ask and seek to answer for themselves, what the real substance of education is and what schools are for, as this is bedrock on which they rest their practice. So, to practice what I preach, I root by practice as an educational-practitioner in the belief that education is a life-long process of learning that each person engages in that enables them to live a loving life that they find satisfying and enables them to contribute to the flourishing of their own humanity that of other people too. The aim, in very general terms of school (and other education establishments) I believe is to provide children and adults with learning opportunities and support to develop and contribute knowledge of the world, themselves and themselves in and of the world so we, and other species, might all flourish. Building on this bedrock I focus in this paper on two of the many purposes of an education system that, I believe, should be of central concern for teachers irrespective of their field of practice or local circumstances. The two purposes I focus on are:

- i) enabling learners to acquire skills and knowledge determined by a 'given' curriculum provided by an establishment or organisation such as a school, college or university,
- ii) enabling people to create and follow their 'living' curriculum life-long, formed as they create knowledge in the process of learning what it is for them to live loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile lives that contributes to the flourishing of humanity.

The commensurate teachers' roles and responsibilities are those of instructor and that of professional educational-practitioner, and that of students as critical and creative acquirers of knowledge, and creators and contributors of knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world. I will show as the paper progresses how, in the process of creating and making public valid accounts of their living-educational-theory, teachers and students are able to fulfil their responsibilities in both roles simultaneously.

Ginott (1972), an Israeli schoolteacher, child psychologist and psychotherapist, working in the USA, illustrates vividly the challenge of resolving the tensions teachers experience between their roles as instructor (delivering the given curriculum) and professional educational-practitioner (supporting their student to follow their living, life-long educational curriculum):

'On the first day of the new school year, all the teachers in one private school received the following note from their principal:

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man 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 human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.' (p.317)

I recognise that motivations vary and hence what may be meant by making children more human. 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. Crompton (2010) draws on Schwartz to distinguish between what he calls:

'... 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. 10)

For me to contribute to the educational journey of a child becoming more human I am concerned that they come to understand and give expression to the values that give meaning and purpose to their life, the values Crompton refers to as 'intrinsic' or 'self-transcendent', and learn how to respond constructively when they experience themselves as living contradictions or experience their life-affirming values contradicted in practice.

Umberto Maturana, a Chilean biologist, gives an insight into a student's distress when taught by a teacher who is concerned with their responsibilities as an instructor but who loses sight of their responsibility as educational-practitioner. Maturana (1994) wrote this poem when his son became unhappy at school.

'A Students 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.*

There can be a tension between a teacher realizing their responsibilities as instructor to enable their student to acquire the knowledge the 'given' curriculum comprises and as educational-practitioner to support their students to create and follow their lifelong continually evolving curriculum which will enable them to create and contribute knowledge of the world, themselves and themselves in and of the world as they learn to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life. I share Biesta's (2006) concerns of how 'learning' is understood and translates into practice when he writes:

'The main problem with the new language of learning is that it has facilitated a redescription of the process of education in terms of an economic transaction, that is, a transaction in which (1) the learner is the (potential) consumer, the one who has certain "needs", in which (2) the teacher, the educator, or the educational institution is seen as the provider, that is, the one who is there to meet the needs of the learner, and where (3) education itself becomes a commodity – a "thing" – to be provided or delivered by the teacher or educational institution and to be consumed by the learner.' (pp. 19, 20)

I like Renzulli and Reis's (1997) notion of three dynamically inter-related learning opportunities:

1. opportunities for playful experimentation and experiences which broaden the cognitive range and concern, and the personal, emotional and social palette,
2. opportunities for learning through courses with pre-determined learning objectives, often provided by a 'given' curriculum
3. opportunities to behave as an expert researching a question of personal interest, in a disciplined manner, within a time frame and with a valued (by self and other/s) outcome.

I can see how 'given' curricula of schools and 'education' establishments and the 'living' curriculum of a student can be held together. I can also see that a 'given' a curriculum can save a teacher wasting time 'reinventing' wheels

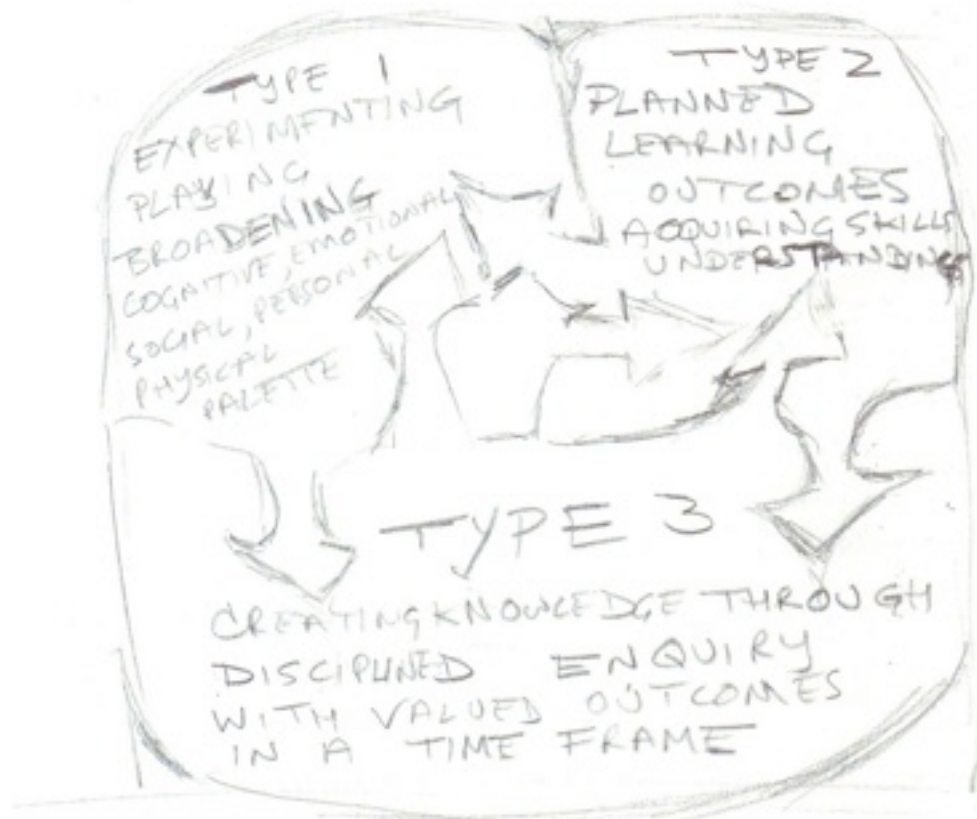


Figure 1 Renzulli's three types of learning opportunities

There is no intended hierarchy or systematic progression from one type of learning opportunity to another but rather that there is a development of the sophistication of the learner as they create and engage in such learning opportunities over time through their 'living' curriculum. In 'education' establishments such as school, college and universities, the preoccupation is often with the 'given' curriculum and providing courses with pre-determined outcomes (type 2 learning opportunities). This is not only stultifying, it is counter productive in enabling people to thrive in, and contribute to, the rapidly changing and increasing complex world of today.

I have found TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context, Wallace and Adams, 1993) (figure 2.) useful for those researching a question of personal interest in a disciplined manner (type 3 learning opportunity). TASC is a form of Action Research and has been used internationally by children, young people and adults. Through my doctoral thesis I evolved a notion of Living Theory TASC. Living Theory TASC, a relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis. Living Theory TASC integrates Living Theory research (Whitehead, 1989) with Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC)

(Wallace & Adams, 1993) to create and contribute validated knowledge of self, self in and of the world, and of the world.



Figure 2. TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context)

I am not advocating that teachers abandon their role and responsibilities as instructor, efficiently and effectively engaging their students in the 'given' curriculum. It is important that we each learn to draw on, and creatively and critically engage with, the knowledge of others. Without learning from the past we would still be scratching with twigs on cave walls rather than using the various means modern technology affords us to create and communicate knowledge. Rather I have used Renzulli's notion of three types of learning opportunities and Living Theory TASC to hold together my responsibilities to meet the expectations of my 'employer' and to be the best professional educational-practitioner I can be.

I now want to move back from aspiration to introduce you to Living Theory research as a way for teachers, in the here and now, to improve their instructional *and* educational practice.

My meaning of educational praxis

A relationship between theory and practice with a moral purpose is indicated in some notions of praxis. 'Praxis' has various meanings and I do not intend to go into detail here. I want to focus on two points to clarify my meaning of educational praxis. First, that theory and practice are held together. Not as theory applied or action theorised but in a dynamic relationship, where praxis is created in the living-boundary (Huxtable, 2012) between theory and practice. Second, the theory which practice is explained by, and the standards by which practice is judged, are grounded in the ontological and social values of the professional educational-practitioner engaged in educational research. To make this clear I developed a notion of 'Living Educational Theory (or Living Theory) praxis' through my doctoral research (Huxtable, 2012).

I have understood praxis to be about doing what is right according to an impersonal criterion while Living Theory praxis is educational praxis and as such is about accepting *my* responsibility to offer valid, values-based, generative and transformational, explanations of the best life I can live for self and others. Values are what I believe to be important and give meaning and purpose to my life, and beliefs are what I believe to be true. How you look at things, the generative, hope fuelled stories you tell yourself to describe and explain what happens in your life and why you do what you do, and your ability to recognise and generatively transform your narratives, and your embedded and embodied theories, seem to be key to living a life which contributes to your own sense of well-being and well-becoming and that of others. What are needed for such stories to be transformed into educational research are explanations of educational influences in learning.

I now want to exemplify what I mean with accounts of teachers who have engaged in Living Theory to enhance access to the 'given' curriculum *and* enable their pupils/students to develop and follow their 'living' curriculum and in the process changed perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching.

Examples of Living Theory research as a practical approach that enables a teacher to fulfil their responsibilities as a professional educational-practitioner

The two of the many responsibilities teachers have as professional educational-practitioners I focus on their responsibility to research their practice to i) improve it and ii) contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

I understand Living-Theory research to have many features in common with some approaches to Action Research. However, in Action Research the emphasis is most often on practice and reflection, and not on the researcher generating and contributing educational theory as they seek to give expression in practice to their embodied ontological and relational life-affirming values. A Living-Theory researcher goes beyond simply employing a self-reflective form of enquiry.

Living Theory research is a form of self-study educational-practitioner research whereby the professional educational-practitioner researches questions that are important to them and in the process seeks to improve what they are doing as they generate valid, values-based explanations of their educational influence in learning, their own, other people's and of the social formations they are part of (Whitehead, 1993). They do this by clarifying their values, as they emerge and evolve in the process of enquiry and which form their explanatory principles and living standards of judgement in valid accounts of their practice.

In the process of researching to create knowledge of the world, knowledge of improving educational practice in the case of professional educational practitioners, Living Theory researchers also create knowledge of self and self in and of the world. The researcher comes to know them self, the person they are and want to be making a contribution to a world in which humanity can flourish. The self is studied not as an egotistical exercise or a form of therapy. Living-educational-theories are:

'... the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live. I usually call such explanations **living-educational-theories** to distinguish the explanations **created** by individual practitioner-researchers from the explanations **derived** from theories of education (Whitehead, 1989). In the creation of a living-theory an individual explains their present practice and influence in terms of an evaluation of the past and an intention to create something better in the future that has yet to be realised in practice.' (Whitehead, 2011, Bergen Keynote)

The learning demanded of a Living Theory researcher offers possibilities to people concerned with the transformation of learning and lives as an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian process, and not just those identified as 'teachers' or 'learners'. We are all teaching and learning our selves and others for much of our time, whether or not we are in an education establishment or specifically identify our activities as such. Robyn Pound for example, gives an account (Pound, 2014) of her Living Theory research, when working with 'Moving on Up' a multi-agency project, to develop therapeutic movement for mothers with postnatal depression and promote physical activity in families.

I believe the purpose of education is more than to just bring a student to a new and deeper understanding of him/herself and of the nature of his/her relationship to other people. It is also to enable them to take action to continually enhance their educational influence in their own learning and life and that of others. The emancipating purpose of education can be understood, in part, as students are enabled to develop the means by which s/he may continue to develop throughout their lives those abilities to enhance the well-being of us all.

Living Theory research is educational and a self-study of a person's presence in the world that is generative and transformational in the process of researching to improve it. It is:

- Inclusive - Through the cooperative engagement with others, in the process of creating their living-theories, each researcher develops and offers, talents, expertise and knowledge that are recognised and valued. The unique 'i' is valued as distinct from 'you' but not discrete within 'we'
- Emancipating – The researcher as learner is empowered to accept and express their responsibility for the educational influence they have in their own learning and life, that of others and the social formations they are part of
- Egalitarian – Power to create, contribute and benefit from talents and knowledge is by each and all and expressed within an i~we, i~you relationship.

As professional educational-practitioners I believe teachers are beholden to continually seek to understand, explain and improve their educational practice and praxis and contribute the educational knowledge they generate in the process to enhance the educational knowledge base we can all draw on.

My argument here is that if we continually do what we have always done we will get what we have always got. Living Theory research offers a different way for teachers to research to understand, improve and explain their practice and realise their responsibility as instructor and a professional educational-practitioner in a time of changing perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching.

This is exemplified by Living Theory research undertaken by teachers published in international peer reviewed journals or legitimated by the Academy as being of Masters and Doctoral quality. For example, the papers published in the issue of *Gifted Education International* 2016, devoted to 'Creating a profession of educators with the living-theories of master and doctor educators' - *Gifted Education International*, 2016, 32(1), pp. 6–25).

There are numerous examples in many journals but most have restricted access or cost authors or readers. So I cite examples here that can be found in the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* (accessed from <http://ejolts.net>) as it is an international journal with high academic and scholarly criteria with no cost for authors or readers and members of EJOLTs give their time and expertise freely to work with authors in an open educational review process giving expression in practice to emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian values. EJOLTs offers an opportunity for teachers to fulfil their responsibility as professional educational practitioners to make their knowledge public irrespective of their financial circumstances as long as they can access the Internet.

I have selected the following to illustrate the perspectives and approaches of teachers practicing in diverse cultures around the world:

Caitriona McDonagh and Bernie Sullivan work and live in Ireland and were successful in completing their living-theory doctorates at the University of Limerick, Eire. Their paper (2017) illustrates how by engaging in Living Theory research and supporting others to do so too, they realise their responsibilities as professional educational-practitioners:

Title

Living Research: How do we realise our capacity to create knowledge as we live towards our professional values in our practice?

Abstract

In this paper, we discuss how we came to recognise our capacity to be effective agents of change and what this might mean for our facilitation of teachers conducting living research in their practice. We outline our learning from a variety of settings, including a cross-sectoral group of teachers, a wholeschool staff, student-teachers and a network of educational researchers. We examine the idea of the teacher, and also the facilitator, as an agent of change and how this has the potential to result in improvement in educational practice and in understanding of practice. We investigate how new learning can emerge from the process of finding ways to support others as they conduct their living research into their practice. The creation of new knowledge in this way represents one of the educational values to which we subscribe and which frames our approach to living educational theory. As we developed our living-theory of knowledge-creation, we found ways to articulate, appreciate and acknowledge professional knowledge that went beyond curriculum knowledge and professional skills to embrace the professional integrity and the experiential knowledge of educators.

Sadrudin Bahadur Qutoshi works and lives in Pakistan. His living-theory doctorate was awarded by Kathmandu University Nepal. His paper (Qutoshi, 2016) illustrates the same point in a very different context to that of McDonagh and Sullivan:

Title

Creating my own living-theory: An autoethnographic-soulful inquiry

Abstract

This paper aims to present my educative-transformational journey as a part of my doctoral research project (Qutoshi, 2016), which started in 2013. In addressing the culturally disempowering nature of teacher education and research practices in the context of Pakistan, I embraced a transformative research paradigm. In so doing, I engaged with making meaning of my lived experiences through imaginative, innovative and creative ways of re/constructions of past and present epiphanies as a student, teacher, vice/principal, teacher/educator, and research supervisor, and envisioned a transformative teacher education and research practice for Pakistan. To this end, I employed unconventional, multiple data referents/tools, multiple logics, and genres so as to generate data sets within autoethnography as a key methodological referent in a multiparadigmatic research design space. Such critical reflection and inward-out observation, to my past and present, enabled

me to envision future practices with an inclusive, empowering, and liberating view of teacher education to create a better world. Hopefully, my own living educational-theory (Whitehead, 1989) with my embodied values of, 'intention, humility for humanity, care of self and others with ecological consciousness, love and peace', will be instrumental in achieving a morphing view of education that makes a difference in the lives of self and others with its ripple impacts.

Lesley Wood works in a South African university where the country is in the process of transforming from a country riven by apartheid, to that of an egalitarian, emancipating and inclusive society.

Title

The transformative potential of living theory educational research

Abstract

Transformation, based on the values of social justice, inclusion and respect for human dignity, is espoused by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University as a core value. However, there is a danger that transformation and its accompanying values will remain empty rhetoric unless they are incorporated into everyday practice at micro-levels. I am therefore prompted to ask 'How can we use educational theory to transform our practices at higher education?' In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate how values-based, self-study action research can help provide answers to questions about educational theory: I will demonstrate how I, together with colleagues, hold ourselves accountable for our own practices via the generation of living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989) and by so doing, make significant contributions to the growth of educational knowledge. I make a case that self-study practitioner inquiry has a vital role to play in the development of new theories of practice which will contribute to the transformation of the epistemology of educational inquiry in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Joy Mounter successfully completed her Masters, which was awarded from University of Bath, UK. She has moved from working in a school to a higher education provider and is registered with University of Cumbria, UK on a doctoral research programme, provisionally titled, 'How can (do) I contribute to the creation and enhancement of the educational influences of a community of learners, supporting each other and their own development?'. The paper I want to draw your attention to here (Mounter, 2014), was created while Joy was researching her practice as a Head teacher.

Title

Improving practice as a head-teacher through living theory research and communicating meanings of embodied values.

As a Head-teacher of a state funded English primary school I have a duty to implement government policy, and a personal and professional commitment to providing children with the best possible educational experience. There are times I, like many other educators nationally and internationally, experience tensions between these two drivers when my values are contradicted. This paper offers my living-theory (Whitehead, 1989), a description and values-based explanation of how I am working to resolve these contradictions and the educational influence I am having in my own learning, the learning of staff and children, and the learning of my school.

I have tried to offer you a couple of concrete examples of how teachers have engaged in Living Theory research as a practical approach to fulfilling their responsibilities as professional educational practitioners to not only research their practice to improve it but also to contribute the knowledge they generate to the evolution of an educational knowledge base. Creating and making public multimedia accounts of their living-theories is an integral part of the creative, multi-dimensional relationally dynamic process Living Theory researchers engage in. Producing a publishable account is not simply a retrospective telling of the past. The publishable account passes through at least two distinguishable phases. First the researcher creates a writerly multimedia account, to help them clarify their practice and their embodied values, which form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgement of practice as they in the course of the research. Quite often this begins with the researcher gathering and telling stories, such as stories of action, stories of their values and stories of their reflections, which help them 'see' what they are thinking. There is a transformation when the researcher moves to the 'readerly' phase. The result of the readerly phase is the creation of an account that communicates to a particular audience. Questions of validity (drawing on Habermas's criteria for social validation, Habermas, 1976) can be asked in a small group specially mustered for the purpose and/or it may be asked through submitting a paper to a journal or presenting a paper at a conference such as this. So, making public Living Theory research does not just fulfil the responsibility of professional educational practitioners to contribute to an educational knowledgebase, it is also integral to the development of praxis and the stories and explanations of teacher's practice.

Many other examples of teachers practicing in diverse cultures using a Living Theory research can be freely accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net> and in journals such as the Journal of Living Theories, freely accessible from <http://ejolts.net/>.

Examples of how through continually researching and making public their living-educational theories, teachers can develop emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational practice

To conclude the paper I want to offer examples of a teacher and her students developing emancipating, inclusive, egalitarian educational learning together.

Neema Parekh (2016) lives and works in India and gives you an insight into how she has developed emancipating, inclusive, egalitarian educational learning together with her mentor and pupils.

Title

A journey in learning: My reflective account

Abstract

A living theory methodology for improving practice and generating knowledge asks questions of the kind 'How do I improve what I am doing?' This paper is a patchwork text: it explains how I enhanced my practice and gained clarity in my practice drawing on the Living Educational Theory approach. It concerns a personal journey I took and is the explanation of the educational influences on my learning and teaching: how I recognised my values and the inconsistencies between my values and my practice. It shows how I negated the contradictions and started living and practising my values in real life. I have used emails written to a friend and also to my mentor over a period of twelve years from 2004-2016 to represent the emotional side of my learning and my reflections to represent the theories of my learning. Through my journey I wish to illustrate the need for Government teachers in India to become well informed of current practices and theories in education if we wish to understand the needs of our students, meet those needs and know how to create and sustain an atmosphere of care, trust and co-operation. I hope lessons learnt by me can be drawn on by other teachers so that they can make learning an enjoyable, stress-free experience for the children of rural India.

Neema Parekh is one of Swaroop Rawal's students. Swaroop also works and lives in India as teacher, teacher educator and educational consultant influencing governmental strategy and policy. She was awarded her doctorate by Warwick University, UK, for her living-theory thesis titled, 'The Role Of Drama In Enhancing Life Skills In Children With Specific Learning Difficulties In A Mumbai School: My Reflective Account.' Swaroop is now being awarded an honorary doctorate by the university for her international contribution to education.

The paper (Ukani & Rawal, 2016) Swaroop wrote with Rushita Ukani, one of her students, shows the educational influence Swaroop has had in the learning of her student Ukani, and her student's (Ukani's) educational influence in her students.

Title

A dream for equal education: Reflections on creating a living-educational-theory.

Abstract

Equal education, transformation and social change are challenging subject matters. This paper, written in collaboration between a student-teacher and a teacher- educator, narrates the journey taken by the student--

teacher in a quest to find herself and an opening for educational change in a school for marginalised girls. The marginalised have a deep distrust of their voices. In this paper we provide an alternative that allowed one such teacher to communicate her lived experience. The connective reflection of the teacher-educator develops a theoretical perspective regarding the student-teacher's inquiry and grounds the creation of her living educational theory. Dealing with gender inequality, life skills and imagination through this collaboration we hope to connect our inquiry with the struggles of teachers in rural India, and hope to stimulate a dialogue in a search for a social vision of equal education.

You can also see the further examples of the educational influence teachers have had in their own learning, the learning of their students and colleagues and in the social formations they live and work in through engaging in Living Theory research in diverse cultures and contexts by dipping into their living-posters accessible from

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage020617.pdf>

Concluding thoughts

The focus of this paper has been on the clarification and development of educational praxis that is emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian, as an optimistic and hopeful response to the theme of the conference, 'Changing perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching'. The audience I have sought to communicate with here are teachers and teacher educators employed in education systems wishing to research their practice to improve it and contribute to the growth of an educational knowledge base that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

Through this paper I have clarified two purposes of education systems, the associated roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners, tensions and opportunities afforded to both and Living Theory research as a practical approach for teachers to realise their responsibilities as professional educational-practitioners and instructors. I have provided examples of how Living Theory research has been used by teachers in diverse contexts to develop their educational praxis informed by their desire to give expression in practice to their embodied life-affirming and life-enhancing values that give meaning and purpose to their lives.

It might be argued that Living-Theory praxis is a tautology. However, while Living-Theory may express a particular form of understanding of praxis, not all praxis may be in the form of a living-educational-theory. As I talk of 'a gift freely offered' to emphasise that what I offer is done so without expectation or obligation, I talk of Living Educational Theory praxis to emphasise a form of praxis comprising an integration of theory and practice with a moral intent. The 'moral intent' in Living Theory praxis is formed by the unique constellation of embodied life-affirming and life-enhancing values that give each person's life meaning and purpose. As such it is as particularly relevant for teachers dealing with changing perspectives and approaches in contemporary teaching and who want to contribute to education systems which address '... all forms of disparities

and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes, exclusion and marginalization’.

I have shown the particular relevance of Living Theory research for teachers as professional educational-practitioners as it is a form of self-study practitioner-research where ‘i’ is not a self-serving ‘I’ or a discrete entity. The ‘i’ is a relational self seeking to recognise and enhance their unique contribute to the flourishing of humanity of all, as expressed in the phrases ‘I am because we are’ held together with, ‘We are because I am’. The intention for a teacher engaged in Living Theory research is to understand and explain their educational influence to enhance learning of students through the ‘given’ curriculum of the employing institution and the ‘living’, life-long curriculum of the student. An account of their living-theory praxis communicates how a teacher holds themselves to account for their educational influence and for having an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian influence that enhances well-being and well-becoming of each and all and so addresses ‘... all forms of disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes, exclusion and marginalization’.

I have provided examples where teachers have developed emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian educational praxis in the form of valid accounts of the Living Theory research, through which they meet their obligations to their employers, fulfil their responsibilities as professional educational-practitioners and their responsibility to themselves to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for themselves and others. By creating and making public valid living-theory accounts through open access journals, such as EJOLTs, teachers and others, can realise their responsibilities to contribute to a global movement for the flourishing of humanity. I do hope you will visit <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage020617.pdf> check out what others are doing to this end and contribute your own living-poster.

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