BERA SIG Worcester June 2019: Global Perspectives: Re-imagining Education

What, why, how and who can contribute to, and benefit from, a global educational knowledgebase?
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Abstract

UNICEF declares:

The main purpose of knowledge exchange is to connect practitioners (in any field or discipline) with each other so they can discuss their work, learn from one another -- and achieve improvements in results. Sharing knowledge, especially experiential knowledge, is a key ingredient in innovation. Knowledge exchange is essential to achieve continual learning from experience and apply that learning to improve our work. (https://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/)

This statement reflects two of my interests, which are to enable educational practitioner-researchers, wherever they are based to: i) contribute to and benefit from a global educational knowledgebase and; ii) connect with others of a like mind who are also developing educational knowledge, theory, practice and opportunities that contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

Opportunities to meet like-minded researchers, and to be able to contribute to and access a global educational knowledgebase are often limited to university employees. The question that has interested me over the last few years has been, ‘how can such opportunities be more accessible to all, whatever their location, discipline or field of practice?’

In this paper I will explore this question by clarifying ‘what’ distinguishes educational knowledge, ‘why’ it is created, ‘how’ it may be created and communicated and ‘who’ should be contributing to and benefiting from a global educational knowledgebase. I will present two forms of communication that are being developed in the course of researching the question with like minded educational practitioner-researchers: i) ‘living-posters’ and; ii) publishing electronic academic posters in an open access online journal.

Introduction

I was inspired by the title of this conference, ‘Global Perspectives: Re-imagining Education’, to want to participate by presenting a paper. ‘Re-imagining’ offers an invitation to all concerned with improving education to take a step aside from the daily pressures of targets and league tables to consider the meaning and implications of a, ‘humanistic vision of education and development’ (Education 2030, Incheon Declaration, p.iii) and ask fundamental questions of ourselves such as, ‘how do I explain why I do what I do with such passion and commitment?’, ‘what are the standards by which I judge what I do as ‘improving’ education?’, ‘how do I improve
this process of education here?’ and to imagine new possibilities to transform, rather
than just re-form, educational knowledge and practice. That brings me to the second
point, ‘global perspectives’. That inspired me to want to participate in the
conference, with thoughts of the UNICEF declaration:

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or discipline) with each other so they can discuss their work, learn from one
another -- and achieve improvements in results. Sharing knowledge, especially
experiential knowledge, is a key ingredient in innovation. Knowledge exchange is
essential to achieve continual learning from experience and apply that learning
to improve our work. (https://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/)

Two of my interests are to enable educational practitioner-researchers, wherever
they are based:

(i) To contribute to and benefit from a global educational knowledge base and;
(ii) To connect with others of a like mind who are also developing educational
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flourishing of humanity. Opportunities to meet like-minded researchers, and
to be able to contribute to and access a global educational knowledgebase
are often limited to university employees. The question that has interested
me over the last few years has been, ‘how can such opportunities be more
accessible to all, whatever their location, discipline or field of practice?’

What do I mean by the ‘flourishing of humanity’? There are many lexical definitions
but they are consistent in defining humanity with reference to the qualities that
make us human, such as the ability to love, have compassion, be creative and give
expressions to humane values such as benevolence, care, kindness, thoughtful and
sympathetic actions towards others. Values that Whitehead refers to as energy
flowing life-enhancing values that carry hope for the flourishing and what Crompton
(2010) refers to as ‘compassionate’ and ‘intrinsic’ values. So when I make reference
to ‘the flourishing of humanity’ I do so to encompass in one short phrase the
flourishing of my humanity, your humanity, our humanity and the flourishing of
Humanity as a species.

Why participate by presenting a paper? It provides the impetus for me to critically
and creatively engage with my own thinking as well as that of others and rigorously
test the validity of my knowledge claims emerging from my research. I describe my
research as educational research understanding the purpose of my research as
Eisner (1993) says:

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

I go further than Eisner and say that I do research to try to understand in order to
make this world, and not just our schools a better place to be for all. I do that by
researching my educational practice to: understand it; improve it; give a values-
based explanation of my educational influence in learning; and contribute the
knowledge generated to a global, educational knowledgebase by making the knowledge public in various ways.

Education is a values-laden process. I therefore engage in Living Theory research to generate valid accounts of my ‘living-educational-theory’, a phrase coined by Whitehead (1989) meaning valid accounts of my values-based explanations of my educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations. I briefly clarify later in the paper what distinguishes Living Theory research from other self-study, practitioner-research methodologies and why it is particularly relevant to researchers concerned with ‘re-imagining’ education.

Preparing and presenting an academic and scholarly paper is part of an educational research process as it provides an opportunity: ‘to make common’ (Bohm, 1996, p.3) what I already believe I know; to test the validity of my knowledge claims; and to extend my internal dialogue and discussion with new voices to, “make in common, i.e. create something new together” (Bohm’s emphasis).

I like the distinction between ‘dialogue’ and ‘discussion’ that Bohm (ibid) makes with respect to the purpose of dialogue being to, ‘…make possible a flow of meaning…out of which may emerge some new understanding…which may not have been in the starting point at all.’ and his description of discussion as a process of ‘analysing and breaking up’, but not in order to play a game as Bohm has it, but in order to understand the question, idea, thought… as Collingwood (1991) says:

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

I believe that a person must be engaging in the same process in their self-talk for them to be able and willing to engage in dialogue and discussion with others, which can lead to ‘making in common’ educational knowledge. I wonder whether for the most part the voices in self-talk are reaffirming what is already believed and engaging in conversation or literature serves the same purpose. I admit that is often the self-talk I engage in. It is what attracts me to some ideas; they are consistent with my own and it is reassuring to find I am in company.

However, I also have times when I know I have to attend to that annoying voice of doubt and critically study what I have said and written to more clearly understand what is in my own mind that is distilling into a question. The voices that I bring into my internal dialogue and discussion are those I give to my intended audience and to the authors of the works I creatively and critically engage with. For me it is not just an intellectual process it is also visceral and emotional, which can make it a very uncomfortable or even painful experience. I often observe similar responses in others. The energy evoked from ‘body and heart’ can be helpful if embraced and worked with creatively but can also be damaging if allowed to override the ‘head’. The response I sometimes get from others when they interpret what I say as a voice
of doubt I take as evidence that other people also experience the communication emotionally and viscerally and often do not want to hear that voice, irrespective of whose it is; their intention in the communication with me is to ‘make common’ what is in their mind and not ‘make in common’ something new, whether with themselves, me or with others.

How does creating and presenting a paper challenge me to go beyond ‘making common’ knowledge to use this as an opportunity for creating educational knowledge? Maybe to be able to feel confident about what I am presenting I have to be convinced that I literally ‘know’ what I am talking about. To create a paper I have to first lay out my claims and arguments for me to understand and test the validity of what is in my mind. I shift from theory ‘generation’ to theory ‘verification’ Whitehead (1982) as I create an account that communicates to others for further critique. In doing so I give a voice to my audience in my internal dialogue and discussion and in the process strengthen and develop the knowledge I intend to ‘make common’. Finally in presenting, rather than just publishing, I have the opportunity of engaging directly with others to ‘make in common’ and contribute in the here and now to an ongoing global ‘educational conversation’ (Whitehead, 2019) that fulfils the purpose UNICEF (ibid) lays out.

Coming to know the question in many respects can be said to be an integral part of a process that creates an answer. Hence an answer to the question as to why, what, how and who can contribute to, and benefit from, a global educational knowledgebase is created in the process of a person clarifying the question for themselves and with others. So in this paper I offer what has emerged so far as I have tried to clarify the question I am researching.

I begin with summarising my current thinking about ‘what’ distinguishes educational knowledge, ‘why’ it is created, ‘how’ it may be created and communicated and ‘who’ should be contributing to and benefiting from a global educational knowledgebase. In the concluding sections of the paper I summarise what I see as some of the impediments to realising the UNICEF intension of connecting practitioners across fields, disciplines, cultures and countries and present two forms of communication that are being developed to widen engagement: i) ‘living-posters’ and; ii) publishing electronic academic posters in an open access online journal as a contribution to enhancing the development of global perspectives for reimagining education. In the final section I move from ‘making common’ or sharing where I have got to, to speculate about what might emerge from presenting this paper that holds the hope of creating educational knowledge ‘ in common’.

Through out the whole paper I endeavour while exploring practical and theoretical issues concerning, What, why, how and who can contribute to, and benefit from, a global educational knowledgebase, to focussed on the core purpose of it all, which is to enhance the ability of us each and all to contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

‘What’ distinguishes educational knowledge?

Educational knowledge is distinguished as knowledge created of education as a process of learning. Educational knowledge is also educational in the sense that it
contributes to the learning of those creating and engaging with it. ‘Education’ and ‘learning’ have many different meanings as Ginott (1972) illustrates:

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)

The meanings of ‘to educate’ are various. Bass and Good (2004) describe two of the commonly used meanings and illustrate the importance of being clear in, their paper, ‘Educare and Educere: Is a Balance Possible in the Educational System?’

... educare, which means to train or to mold, and educere, meaning to lead out... One side uses education to mean the preservation and passing down of knowledge and the shaping of youths in the image of their parents. The other side sees education as preparing a new generation for the changes that are to come—readying them to create solutions to problems yet unknown. One calls for rote memorization and becoming good workers. The other requires questioning, thinking, and creating. To further complicate matters, some groups expect schooling to fulfill both functions, but allow only those activities promoting educare to be used. (p. 162)

Reiss and White (2003) go beyond to give a richer meaning where they write:

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.

What Reiss and White have added to the mix is that education is not just to prepare a person to be a member of society. They point to an educational process as that which concerns individuals learning to develop the confidence and competence to acquire, create and contribute knowledge and as a life-long process of learning.
through which a person comes to know the person they are and wants to be as they live as fully as possible a life that is personally satisfying, loving, productive and worthwhile; a life that benefits others as well as themselves.

What distinguishes ‘educational knowledge’ requires an appreciation of the personal, professional and political motivations and contexts of the person/s creating and offering the knowledge. Biesta (2007) talks of something similar when he writes:

‘Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one’s problem solving more intelligent. This not only involves deliberation and judgment about the means and techniques of education; it involves at the very same time deliberation and judgment about the ends of education — and this in a strict and conjugate relation with deliberation and judgment about the means.’ (pp. 20-21)

Like Oancea and Pring (2008) I believe that, ‘Deliberations over the aims of education are essentially moral—concerning the qualities and virtues, the capabilities and understandings that, under the banner of ‘education’, are thought worth promoting’ (p.29). What I believe is worth promoting is reflected in my social values of an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian society and the pedagogical assumptions underpinning my educational practice. I believe that each person, irrespective of age, is capable of creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, of themselves, and of themselves in and of the world, as a gift, to contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

I am distinguishing educational knowledge from other forms of knowledge with respect to not only ‘what’ it is but also ‘why’ it is created, which I expand on now.

‘Why’ educational knowledge is created

To create, offer and accept knowledge of any form requires learning: learning to acquire and use with finesse skills and knowledge created by others, and learning to create, recognise, value, work with and contribute knowledge ourselves. Educational learning is learning that keeps connection between learning to create, value and work with knowledge of the world and creating, valuing and working with knowledge of ourselves and of ourselves in and of the world. Educational learning is learning that enables us to contribute to and benefit from the flourishing of humanity (as I elaborated on earlier).

So why create educational knowledge? It is in the process of creating educational knowledge that I believe we can each enhance our learning and that of others to live a loving life that is satisfying, productive and worthwhile. It is what I understand by what Mounter (2019) represents as ~i~we~I~us~ and what Whitehead (2019) refers to as ‘educational conversations’.
I am not Japanese so do not understand Ikigai as a lived concept but this image adds to my understanding of the educational implications of creating educational knowledge. Ikigai often translated as ‘A reason for being’, of finding your purpose in life. I like it particularly because it points to what is ‘missing’ when all the ‘pieces’ are not held in harmony.

Image 1. A representation of Ikigai downloaded from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/08/is-this-japanese-concept-the-secret-to-a-long-life

The term *ikigai* is composed of two Japanese words: *iki* referring to life, and *kai*, which roughly means “the realisation of what one expects and hopes for”. Unpacking the word and its associated symbol a bit further, *ikigai* is seen as the convergence of four primary elements:

- What you Love (your passion) - What do you Love? What aspects of your life bring you into your heart and make you come alive?
- What the World Needs (your mission) - What Cause do you believe in? What breaks your heart or pulls at your gut? What change would you most love to create in the world? What would you give your life for?
• What you are Good at (your vocation) - What are you Great at? What unique skills do you have that come most naturally to you? What talents have you cultivated and what do you excel at even when you aren't trying?

• What you can get Paid for (your profession) - What do people Value and pay you for? What service, value or offering do you bring, or could you bring, that brings real value to others? Something people need and are happy to pay for or share some value in exchange?

The word *ikigai*, that space in the middle of these four elements, is seen as the source of value or what make one’s life truly worthwhile. In Okinawa, Japan, *ikigai* is thought of as “a reason to get up in the morning”. Interestingly, while certainly incorporating the financial aspects of life, the word is more often used to refer to the mental and spiritual state behind our circumstance as opposed to our current economic status alone. Even if we are moving through a dark or challenging time, if we are moving with purpose, if we are feeling called toward something or have a clear goal in mind, we may still experience *ikigai*. Often the behaviors that make us feel *ikigai* are not the ones we are forced to take based on the expectations of the world around us, but rather they are the natural actions and spontaneous responses that emerge from a deep and direct connection to life.


For me there seems to be a resonance between ikigai and what Frankl said:

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed. Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by *answering* for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. (p.131)

To understand your ikigai, your unique vocation or mission in life is a life-long educational process that requires self-study – the complexity of the ‘self’ studied is that communicated by Mounter (2019) as ‘~i~we~l~us~’ to create and contribute knowledge of self, self in and of the world and knowledge of the world for the flourishing of humanity. Living Theory research is a form of research that enables each person to create and contribute such knowledge.

*How educational knowledge may be created and communicated?*
Living Theory research (Whitehead 1989, 2018) is a form of self-study educational practitioner-research, whereby the researcher researches their educational practice to understand and improve it and create valid explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations (Whitehead, ibid) and contribute educational knowledge generated to a global educational knowledgebase. The embodied life-affirming values that give meaning and purpose to the researcher’s life and educational practice are clarified in the course of the research and form the researcher’s explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others, and the learning of the social formations in which they live and work (Whitehead, 1989). The knowledge created is educational knowledge in both senses I describe above.

By way of contrast most of the research in education is undertaken by university employees from the perspective of one of the disciplines of education, such as psychology, sociology and philosophy. The researchers focus on researching the practice of teachers and educators working directly with their students or at a distance as managers. They share the knowledge they create with other academics, policy-makers and practitioners. This research is often undertaken when funding has been secured from bodies with vested interests, such as a government department to evaluate practice or to evaluate and/or inform a research project being undertaken by practitioners. What practice is researched is therefore often determined by the funders, as are the standards by which ‘improvement’ is judged.

The nature of the research outside of universities is also often influenced by the necessity of securing funding, as funding bids require success to be quantifiable and guaranteed in terms of short-term deliverables identified before the research is undertaken. Longitudinal studies are rare and what will be studied is usually predefined by the dominating theories and research paradigms of the disciplines of education in universities.

The funding of research, the forms of accreditation and the manner of creating and sharing knowledge, serve to reinforce and maintain the prevailing hegemony in such a way that the potentially disturbing questions as to what distinguishes ‘educational’ knowledge, practice and research, is rarely asked or considered. I say ‘disturbing’ as the answers that emerge may not support adopting methodologies currently dominating UK and USA education research, or the development of ever more sophisticated (and profitable) tests by highly influential publishers for government departments responsible for realising the policies created by their political masters. Please note I say ‘may’ not ‘will’. I acknowledge although they don’t generate educational knowledge many methodologies, research methods and knowledge created by those engaged in research in education and elsewhere provide an important resource for researchers creating educational knowledge to critically and creatively engage with.

A browse through a few of the high profile journals shows that for the most part researchers in education, whether academic staff or practitioners, focus on creating knowledge to improve the effectiveness of skills training or the transmission of
knowledge identified in a ‘given’ curriculum, such as the National Curriculum. The success of the research is usually in terms of short-term improvements in measurable outcomes, such as test scores, changes of attitude captured by questionnaires or discourse analysis and so on.

This is exemplified by Winch (2013) where he posits an answer to the question, ‘What kind of occupation is teaching?’ without any clarification of what constitutes educational practice or recognition of teachers’ responsibilities as professional educational-practitioners to create and contribute their knowledge to the growth of an educational knowledgebase:

The ability to make sound professional judgments in educational contexts is central to good teaching. Teachers with a more complete understanding of their practice will create better learning opportunities in the classroom more consistently than the pure craftworker or executive technician. Such teachers will require, among other forms of understanding: a good grasp of the conceptual field of education and debates concerning its interpretation; a good grasp of the philosophical underpinnings of and debates about the foundations of the subjects that they teach; a critical understanding of the scope and limits of empirical educational research; the way in which such research can and should warrant professional judgment and a good grasp of the ethical dimension of their work. (Winch, 2013, p. 14)

This omission in what is published in the journals of powerful organisations, such as BERA, contribute to the cultural norm of what knowledge is and is not created, what knowledge is or is not recognised as ‘academic’ and what is given credibility through publication. Research methodologies and paradigms and the knowledge that emerges, which are not amongst those employed by established academic staff, are often at best sidelined and at worst excluded from the public global discourse and as a result the knowledge they generate is the subject of, as de Sousa Santos (2014) terms it, ‘epistemicide’.

The influence of established academics and practitioners on what distinguishes educational knowledge and conversations around it is often unrecognised, as do the consequences, which I believe are often also unintended. One example of this is offered by Gibson and Garfield (2017) in their paper, The Undergraduate Education Studies Dissertation: Philosophical Reflections upon Tacit Empiricism in Textbook Guidance and the Latent Capacity of Argumentation. While they are concerned with evidence of the tacit preference for empiricism they find in textbooks and university research methodology guidance documents for undergraduates, my attention was caught by how they show one of the mechanisms by which the hegemony of social scientists, and the political climate within which they work, is maintained. Gibson and Garfield write:

Sharp, for example, suggests a ‘taxonomy’ of ‘research paradigms’ that he refers to variously as ‘kinds’ or ‘types’ (Sharp 2010: 45–56. See also Burton et al. 2008; Walliman and Buckler 2008: 150):

- Surveys
• experimental
• case studies
• action research
• documentary research
• ethnographic
• phenomenological
• grounded theory

... In short, it is an example of taxonomic selection that marginalises that which is deemed ‘uncommon’... (p.122)

This caught my attention because of the problems doctoral students I have known experienced because they were not employing one of the established methodologies – Living Theory research is not on Sharp’s list - and their supervisors or examiners were not able and/or willing to venture beyond what they knew was accepted as knowledge in academia. To progress the students have had to learn how to be ‘creatively compliant’ (Macdonald, 1987, p. 5) and at times even find a way to deal with feeling that they had not just compromised to achieve their doctorate but in the process they may have compromised their integrity.

Fortunately they have persisted and there is now a growing body of work that is establishing Living Theory research as legitimate academic knowledge globally. This body of work comprises research awarded doctorates by numerous universities around the world (some are available from http://www.actionresearch.net/) articles published in journals such as the Educational Journal of Living Theories (open access at https://ejolts.net/), British Educational Research Journal and Educational Action Research, and public documents such as, ‘Passion in Professional Practice’ (Delong, 2001-2007) (freely accessible from http://schools.granderie.ca/ar/index.html)

Living Theory research (originated by Whitehead, 1989, 2018) is concerned with a continual process of a practitioner researching their practice to understand and improve it, create valid values-based explanations (the why) of their educational influences in learning and contribute to a global (and accessible) educational knowledgebase. An individual’s account of their living-theory includes their values-based explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and social formations. The knowledge generated is tacit, which poses problems to some academic staff used to working with formal, explicit knowledge. It also poses problems for the educational researcher to create and communicate their educational knowledge. Since he was handed one of the first video cameras as a teacher-researcher in the ’60s Whitehead has been breaking new ground using technology to gather and analyse data and to create multimedia narratives that communicate the energy flowing relational nature of the values at the heart of educational practice. Although there is still some resistance to embracing the potential new technologies offer many universities around the world are now legitimating multimedia doctoral theses. Some of these can be accessed from http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml.

Living Theory researchers have developed various research methods, validation processes and forms of communication as a consequence. How educational
knowledge is created and communicated is inextricably linked with the nature and purpose of educational knowledge, and culminates in multimedia accounts of living-theories. This is illustrated in what follows about living-posters and publishing academic e-posters in an academic online journal.

i) Living-posters

There are many types of posters that can be distinguished by the main purpose they are intended to serve. The idea of living-posters initially arose during the development of a proposal for a ‘Town Hall Meeting’, at the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) 2015 conference in Toronto. The successful proposal, which can be accessed from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNA2015TownHallProposal090215.pdf, included:

The intent of this Town Hall meeting is to engage practitioner-researchers across the globe as on site and virtual, through the internet, attendees in a living-culture-of-inquiry through values-based dialogue in creating living theories (explanations of our influence).

Multi-screen SKYPE conversations are shown to be influencing our perceptions of the idea of Ubuntu that ‘I am because we are/we are because I am’ or i~we for shorthand and enabling us to ‘pool’ our lifeaffirming and life-enhancing energies, as well as sharing and evolving our relationally dynamic culture of inquiry and Living Theory research.

It became evident that many wouldn’t be able to participate through SKYPE for various reasons so another question then presented, ‘how to enable people who could not physically, or virtually participate in real time to be ‘presenced’ with their work?’ The notion of ‘living-posters’ arose as a possible answer. The idea matured to a poster that had images, text, and links that would enable someone to get a snapshot of the researcher’s context, sites of practice, key publications, interests, motivations, research passions and contact details. A link to a video (maximum of 3 minutes) of the researcher talking to camera about the values that gave meaning and purpose to their lives, work and research presenced more of them as a real, living person in a way text and images alone can’t.

We were keen that people shouldn’t be put off by having to learn to use new software or IT skills so they were encouraged to use whatever they were familiar with, for instance Microsoft WORD or PowerPoint, or Mac Pages to create a single page or slide and to send it to us in that format and a pdf. Again using technology easily available they were encouraged to use what they had such as their phone, camera, laptop and upload to make the video and upload it (unlisted or public) to YouTube (or other free platform) so it would be easily accessible.

As we received many more posters than anticipated we had to find a way of displaying them so that each person’s living-poster was visible, connections could be followed and made and they those who landed on the homepage could appreciate the extent of a supportive Living Theory research global community.
It was interesting to see how people expressed their own creativity to produce their poster. They acknowledged the power of the images and videos together with the text to communicate their ontological and relational life-enhancing and life-affirming values expressed in their practice. As we progressed we realized we needed a few keywords, together with the small image of the poster and the researcher’s name, to enable people at a glance to decide whether to investigate further. The brief for creating a living poster evolved to:

1. Create and upload a video-clip (absolute max 3 mins) to YouTube in which you communicate the essentials of your: context; interests; ontological and relational values that motivate you; research passions.
2. Create an attractive page using images and text, which includes brief details of your: context; interests; ontological and relational values that motivate you; research passions; details of a few of your key publications; the url to your website if you have one; your contact details and the url to your YouTube video.
3. Four key words that communicate what you are about.

The homepage is organised with networks at the top. Follow a link and you will see some of the images of the people who form the community or network with a couple of words to give you a clue as to what they are about to help you decide whether to dip into their individual poster, if they have one. If you do you will find links to other networks they are part of to help you further connect with more people with whom you may share a particular interest.
Below the networks you will find thumbnails of individual posters again with a few words to give you a quick idea as to whether you might find it interesting to go into the poster and learn more. Each person has given you a link to a YouTube of them talking for just a couple of minutes so you can get a feel for who they are and what they are about. Each poster is unique and offers an insight into the unique contribution that person is making at a moment in time.

Living-posters, as a research method, has potentially two inter-related uses for a Living Theory researcher developing valid explanations of their educational influences which:

1) Enhance their educational influence in their own learning and
2) Enhances the contributions they make to and the benefit they derive from the learning of others and social formations.

These are, ‘distinct but not discrete’ (Rayner 2005, p. 1). It is possible to use a living-poster in the same way as you could use entries for a journal or diary for private reflective and reflexive thinking, which may, or may not be used as data and/or evidence at a later date. By making your living-posters public you can invite others to help you develop a valid explanation of your educational influence in your own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations and contribute to established, and the emergence of new, ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Living Theory research communities of practice are formed when groups of people, who share a concern or a passion for something they do and want to learn how to do it better and want to produce valid explanations of their educational influences, come together regularly for convivial, productive conversations.

We began to realize that some people were using the creation of the living posters as a research method evolving their research through various iterations. This has come full circle as Swaroop Rawal generated her own living poster http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/SwaroopRawal2704.pdf and then developed the idea further to evaluate and communicate her teacher-training programme to create http://www.spanglefish.com/makingmagic/documents/straws-in-the-wind/straws-in-the-wind-a-poster.pdf, which were be added to the ‘meta living-poster’. This leads me to publishing academic posters as a way of making educational knowledge publically available and as a contribution to a global educational knowledgebase.

**ii) Publishing electronic academic posters in an open access online journal**

While the main purpose of publishing living-posters on the world wide web is to enable researchers to find and connect with others of a like mind, the main purpose of publishing academic posters on the web is to extend the opportunities for researchers to contribute to and benefit from a global knowledgebase.

Over recent years academic posters have become widely used within the academic community by researchers to present their research at conferences. With the development of technology and the internet it is now possible to create interactive
Electronic academic posters. Academic posters effectively summarise the important aspects of the research, are easy to read and understand, are visually appealing and the addition of live links enable the reader to go into as much depth about the research as a traditional academic paper.

The Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) is a free, open access journal that has been publishing peer-reviewed multimedia papers since 2008. Articles published are of a high academic and scholarly quality and contribute to the field of Living Theory research. The researchers whose work is published in EJOLTs live and work in a wide range of global, social, cultural and professional contexts as well researching diverse fields of practice. Not all want or can communicate their research in the form of a traditional academic paper, even if it is a multimedia one and includes live links.

The EJOLTs Development Team and Editorial Board are exploring the new possibilities that publishing electronic academic posters, as well as academic papers, offers a wider community to ‘make common’ and ‘make in common’ educational knowledge.

EJOLTs will shortly be publishing not only papers but also electronic academic posters to give researchers the opportunity share their knowledge in a different format and to make their knowledge accessible to a wider audience. The challenge is for EJOLTs to maintain the high academic and scholarly standard that it has for publishing papers while enhancing the creative possibilities this format has to offer. The publishing criteria are currently emerging as the EJOLTs Development Team, Editorial Board, reviewers and authors develop their democratic ways of creating EJOLTs together.

The challenge of creating a living-poster or an academic poster is related to, but different to, a traditional abstract for a paper, dissertation or thesis. All offer a disciplined focus that demands a distillation to extract the essence of a complex picture. Hence the challenge of producing an abstract in the process of creating a multimedia paper or thesis can help the researcher to clarify what constitutes the practice they are wanting to improve and the values that form their explanatory principles and standards of judgment.

A researcher in the process of creating a living-poster may recognise and value sites of practice, other educational practitioners and forms of knowledge they may not have realised attended to before. By making it public they invite others to do the same and contribute to the growth of a sense of being in a global educational researching community.

An electronic academic poster offers a similar challenge for the researcher to use text, image and video to produce a representation that provides a window into their research at a moment in time and the influential connections to thinking, people, collectives and networks in influencing social formations.

**Who can contribute to, and benefit from, a global educational knowledgebase?**

Which brings me to the last questions, which is predicated by the question, ‘who can create and contribute valid and valuable educational knowledge, for their own
benefit and the benefit of us all? The answer is everyone! Education is a life-long process of learning, as Reiss and White (2013) put it:

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

As such I believe that everyone has a responsibility to engage in education whatever their age, stage or context. Mounter (2008) showed how 6 and 7 year old children can, and want to do so, Bognar and Zovko (2008) showed the same with children in Key Stage 2 and Cartwright (2008) showed the same enthusiasm and ability to create and contribute educational knowledge working with 16 to 17 year old students engaged on an accredited course.

Creating and contributing educational knowledge is not simply restricted to what goes on in ‘education’ establishments. Briganti (2019) demonstrates the influence on her practice as an International Development practitioner working in various challenging contexts, such as war torn Ethiopia and Afghanistan, of researching her practice as a Living Theory researcher engaged in doctoral research:

"I soon realised that the way I was approaching my research, namely the awakening of my consciousness leading to the creation of my own and unique living-theory was influencing other spheres of my life"

"... to co-construct and co-generate knowledge and start seeing ‘all of us equally together, a new world where we can celebrate and all gain for interconnected reciprocities’. I do so by using a Living Theory research methodology, which represents an epistemological space in which critique has no negative connotation, but instead is perceived as a valuable way of improving one’s own practice, enriched by other people’s knowledge and practice."

**Concluding**

As I have worked on this paper I have progressed my understanding of the meaning of ‘educational knowledge’ and the practical implications with respect to the UNICEF declaration

The main purpose of knowledge exchange is to connect practitioners (in any field or discipline) with each other so they can discuss their work, learn from one another -- and achieve improvements in results. Sharing knowledge, especially experiential knowledge, is a key ingredient in innovation. Knowledge exchange is essential to achieve continual learning from experience and apply that learning to improve our work. ([https://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/](https://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/))

I have shown how people of all ages, living and working in diverse contexts, can:

i) Contribute to and benefit from a global educational knowledgebase and;
ii) Connect with others of a like mind who are also developing educational knowledge, theory, practice and opportunities that contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

In the course of the presentation I hope to move from ‘making common’ or sharing where I have got to, to engaging in educational conversations with the hope of creating educational knowledge ‘ in common’ and in the process, contribute to the flourishing of humanity; the flourishing of my humanity, your humanity, our humanity and the flourishing of Humanity as a species. For those who might be interested in continuing such educational conversations there are a number of spaces developing, for instance the Living Theory research Facebook group, Living Theory wiki, which can be accessed from http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page and a Living Theory learning community, which can be accessed from http://www.spanglefish.com/Livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/. I hope you will explore and find something that piques your interest and like-minds to make educational knowledge in common with and then make common.

References


