

Developing professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories.

**Jack Whitehead, University of Cumbria, UK/North West University, SA.
Marie Huxtable, University of Cumbria, UK.**

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This research is closely related to developing professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions. The relationship is established through the use of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional learning. This approach requires professional practitioners to research their own professional learning in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional, educational practice with values of human flourishing?'. It requires each professional practitioner to generate a valid, evidence and values-laden explanation of educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located, with values of human flourishing. These values are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. They are located within the values of the professional learning of educators and the Dublin Declaration (2023) on global education and the core values of global education. A clear distinction is made between education research and educational research. Education research is research that is carried out within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the forms and fields of education, such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, economics, politics and leadership of education, or that makes original contributions to such forms and fields of education. Educational Research generates valid, evidence and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing.

Introduction - Framing within contemporary current issues and debates.

Context

We are writing at a time of various global crises, such as those identified by Brown (2022):

1. global health;
2. climate change and environmental damage;
3. nuclear proliferation;
4. global financial instability;
5. the humanitarian crisis and global poverty;
6. the barriers to education and opportunity;
7. global inequality and its biggest manifestation, global tax havens.

We keep this in mind as we set the paper about Living Educational Theory Research as an approach to professional learning in the context of the contribution this

conference is intended to make to the International Professional Development Association realising its aims to:

- Support and promote professional development and learning of education practitioners and across practitioner contexts
- Stimulate independent critical discussion about policy and practice through networks and fora
- Facilitate and disseminate research and scholarship related to professional development and learning
- Have international reach and global conversations, connecting practitioners and practitioner educators across borders
- Actively engage with other groups with a commitment to practitioner learning

<https://ipda.org.uk/aboutipda/>

It is also set in the context of current global collaborative educational, values-laden ventures between governments such as expressed in The Dublin Declaration:

A new European Declaration on Global Citizenship Education to 2050 has been adopted in Dublin, Ireland on the 20th anniversary of the [Maastricht Declaration](#). The new strategy set out how education will encourage the public to act, individually and collectively, to help build a fairer, more tolerant and more sustainable world for all . . .

And a current global collaborative educational values-laden venture between universities as illustrated by the Magna Charta Universitatum:

The Observatory has launched the new version of the Magna Charta Universitatum: the MCU 2020. The text (in English) has been adopted by the MCO's Governing Council.

The new MCU removes nothing from the original fundamental values to which universities signed up. It strives to be responsive to and resonate with contemporary challenges and concerns.

Its tone recognises that the *pursuit* of the fundamental values has worth along with their actual attainment, which, in practice, is a constant quest. It recognises the more global nature of what universities do and the wider range of local responsibilities which they have.

<https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020>

Finally, this paper is in the context of the purpose and practice of our research, which is to realise our collaborative, educational, values-laden intent by developing professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories and helping others do so too.

We will begin by focussing on clarifying our understanding of the meaning of 'education' that are implicit in the IPDA aims, the Dublin Declaration, the Magna Charta and Living Educational Theory Research. We will then clarify our

understanding of what constitutes 'professional development' as a member of a profession, a professional practitioner and a global citizen. Finally we will illustrate how practitioners, living and working in diverse fields of practice and cultural have developed professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories and in the process realised their educational responsibilities as professional practitioners and global citizens.

Education

'Education' is variously understood and often taken to be synonymous with 'schooling', 'instruction' or 'training' of children. Occasionally 'education' is given a values-laden meaning, as illustrated by Reiss and White's (2013) response to the question they pose in, 'An Aims-based Curriculum: The Significance of Human Flourishing for School':

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 (p.1)

(We suggest similarities to the educational purposes of institutions of education, such as colleges and universities, and professional development, which we come to later)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) an intergovernmental organisation with 38 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade sees 'education' through an 'economic' lens:

The **OECD's** work on education helps individuals and nations to identify and develop the knowledge and skills that drive better jobs and better lives, generate prosperity and promote social inclusion.

Governments looking through a lens of global citizenship produced the Dublin Declaration at the 20th anniversary of the [Maastricht Declaration](#):

Global Education is education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level.

It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future.

Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education.

(The European Declaration On Global Education To 2050: The Dublin Declaration, p.3)

Bjørn Berge, Secretary General while addressing the European Congress of Global Education said:

In democratic countries, education serves four key functions: it provides us with a broad, advanced knowledge base; it equips us to compete in the jobs market; it furthers our personal development; and it prepares us to be active citizens playing our part in civic and national life.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/deputy-secretary-general/-/new-global-declaration-on-education-adopted-in-dublin>

Renzuli's (1977) in his school wide enrichment model put forward a notion of three types of learning opportunities, which we summarise as those:

- That take a person outside of what they know to extend their 'cognitive range and concern', social ways of being... opportunities to play with ideas, personas... opportunities which enrich the palette from which they can draw as they learn life-long to live humanely lives that they find satisfying and are productive and worthwhile...
- With planned learning outcomes which extends a person's skills, knowledge, understandings of a field of practice, academic domain, cultural context... opportunities to acquire and use knowledge created over the eons and, as Newton is reputed to have put it, stand on the shoulder of giants.
- Which provide a person with the challenge to behave as an expert; to create knowledge of potential value to others as well as to themselves. As they do so they extend their knowledge of how to form a question, research it in a disciplined manner, within a time frame and make public their knowledge. TASC (Wallace reference) provides an example of what that looks like and has been used by young children (re Mounter) and adults of advancing years (re Huxtable, 2006).

As we move on to first clarify our understanding of professional development and then describe Living Educational Theory Research as our research approach, we ask you to keep those different views of education in mind and particularly Berge's summary of the purposes of 'education' to:

- Provide people with a broad, advanced knowledge base;
- Equip people to compete in the jobs market;
- Further people's personal development; and

- Prepare people to be active citizens playing their part in civic and national life.

And we would also ask you to keep in mind our understanding, as professional practitioner educational researchers, of education as a life-long, life-wide values-laden process of learning to live humanely a satisfying, productive and worthwhile life and helping others learn to do so too.

Professional development

We make a distinction between a professional as member of a profession and practitioner's claim to be a professional. To claim to be a member of a profession entails being a registered member of a professional organisation and being a professional practitioner.

Being a member of a professional organisation requires conformity to criteria that define membership of the profession. That usually includes:

1. A long period of specialized training.
2. A broad range of autonomy for both the individual practitioners and for the occupational group as a whole.
3. An acceptance by the practitioners of broad personal responsibility for judgments made and acts performed within the scope of professional autonomy.
4. A comprehensive self-governing organization of practitioners. (Fischer & Thomas, 1965, p.325)

To keep their membership of a professional body a practitioner is often expected to maintain a portfolio of their continuing professional development as a log of courses, workshops etc they have attended to show their profession learning of the knowledge and skills of their field of practice is up-to-date. The programme of continuing professional development is distinguished by the curriculum, programme of study, determined by their professional body and/or regulatory organisation.

To realise their educational responsibilities for themselves and towards others a professional practitioner engages in a programme of *continual* professional development. This programme includes researching into their practice to understand and improve it, generate and test the validity of their evidence and values-laden explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located, with values of human flourishing and contribute the knowledge they generate to a global educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all.

What we are arguing is that a professional practitioner should engage in a programme of *continuing* professional development to maintain their expertise in a particular field of practice and they should engage in a programme of *continual* professional development to generate and test the validity of the values-laden

knowledge they create and make it public so that it contributes to the growth of a global knowledgebase for the benefit of all.

Overview of our research approach

Living Educational Theory Research is a form of professional practitioner educational research. A distinction is made between education research and educational research. Education research is research that is carried out within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the forms and fields of education, such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, economics, politics and leadership of education, or that makes original contributions to such forms and fields of education. Educational Research generates valid, evidence and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing.

A Living Educational Theory Research approach requires professional practitioners to hold themselves to account to their values, as well holding them selves to account to their professional body and the community and social formations they live and work in. The do so by researching their practice to understand and improve it and generate a valid, evidence and values-laden explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice researched is located. Whitehead (1989) coined the term 'living-educational-theory' for such explanations. In the course of their research the professional practitioner clarifies the values they embody to identify where they and / or others contradict the values and work to resolve the tensions they experience to enhance their educational influence in the learning of social formation and those who comprise it. These embodied values serve the professional practitioner as evaluative standards and explanatory principles, in their explanations of their educational influences in learning.

Research questions

Living Educational Theory Research requires the generation of explanations of educational influences that include insights from collaboration and learning from other professions. The learning includes insights from critically and creatively engaging with the knowledge generated in other fields of practice and academic disciplines such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education.

In the discussion we will draw on the work of professional practitioners engaged in Living Educational Theory Research living and working in diverse fields of practice and contexts to illustrate how they have explicitly or implicitly offered answers to questions such as:

- In navigating the various dimensions of Inter-professional practice, how does collaboration support all our professional learning?
- How are technologies mobilised across professional boundaries to enable collaboration in professional learning?

- Policies and priorities in education and professional learning – what commonalities and divergencies are at play across the professions?
- What role does leadership play in inter-professional learning?
- How do you move collaborative professional learning from policy to practice?
- How are you realising your professional responsibility to research your values in practice with a view to improving the educational, values-led, influence you have in the learning of people and communities to flourish and help others do so too?
- How are you realising your professional responsibility to contribute to the growth of a global educational knowledge-base for the benefit of all?
- Can you share any evidence of where developing your professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professional practitioners has contributed to the common good?
- How do collaboration and professional learning influence your own practice and provide insights on learning from other professions?

Discussion

The data as evidence presented here, of the original contributions to knowledge of developing professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories, is freely available from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> and the Educational Journal of Living Theories (<https://ejolts.net/>)

In developing professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories the following original contributions focus on the individual professional's unique constellation of values and their learning from other professionals in the generation and sharing of their living-educational-theories. For example, Briganti (2020) explains how this was done in her thesis abstract:

My thesis is focused on the relationally dynamic values of empathy, social and gender justice, outrage, responsibility, love for and faith in humanity and dignity. The originality lies in their use as explanatory principles in my explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that affect my practice as a development professional. My other original contribution to knowledge is to relate the threefold nature of Living Theory methodology – a self-reflexive action-led research, a way of life, and a social movement - with my practice in International Development, which provides an example of how limitations in this sector might be overcome.

My self-reflexive research conceptualizes International Development as a global responsibility. It offers instances of how to work with others at micro (community) level, meso (organizational) level and shows my developing understanding of my potential systemic influence at a political (macro) level.

By drawing insights mainly from self-study and narrative enquiry methodologies, my living-theory of International Development is presented as an alternative to the neoliberal approach and rests on the idea that Development means having a chance to contribute to a good change (Chambers, 1997, p.1743). My stories derive from the experiences of my own life and that of the people I work with. I use the South African concept of Ubuntu and its transformative growth into I~we~us relationships. Whilst exploring commonalities between Living Theory and International Development, I show they can reinforce each other and combine in the practical realization of a commitment to a fairer world. A generative form of development emerges that includes a gendered epistemology. I discuss how my own pursuit of gender justice has improved the quality of my work as a female development economist and practitioner, living in a capitalistic era.

Charles (2007) also draws on the values of Ubuntu in his original contribution to knowledge:

This is a living theory thesis which traces my engagement in seeking answers to my question that focuses on how I can improve my practice as someone seeking to make a transformational contribution to the position of people of African origin. In the course of my enquiry I have recognised and embraced Ubuntu, as part of an African cosmology, both as my living practice and as a living standard of judgement for this thesis. It is through my Ubuntu way of being, enquiring and knowing that my original contribution to knowledge has emerged.

Two key approaches are identified and described in depth: 'guiltless recognition' and 'societal re-identification'. These emerge from a perception of self that is distinct within but not isolated in an awareness of 'inclusionality'. They are intimately related concepts. Guiltless recognition allows us to move beyond the guilt and blame that maintains separation and closes down possibility. It provides a basis for action and conception that moves us towards the imagined possibilities of societal reidentification with Ubuntu.

Both 'guiltless recognition' and 'societal reidentification' embody strategic and epistemological practices that move away from severing, colonising thought, towards ways of being that open up new possibilities for people of African origin and for humanity generally.

Visual narratives are used to represent and help to communicate the inclusional meanings of these living standards of judgement. The narratives are focused on my work as a management consultant and include my work with Black managers. They explain my educational influence in creating and sustaining the Sankofa Learning Centre for Black young people in London. They include my living as a Black father seeking to remain present and of

value to my son within a dominant discourse/context in which this is a contradiction to the prevalent stereotype.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that we are all influenced in different ways by the seven major problems identified by Brown, (2021) and more. As professional practitioner educational researchers we accept our educational responsibilities as global citizens, which are indicated in, for example, the Dublin Declaration (2020), the Magna Charta Universitatum, and to contribute to improving education as a life-long, life-wide values-laden process of learning to live humanely a satisfying, productive and worthwhile life and helping others learn to do so too.

We also accept our responsibility to share our learning as we seek to enhance the flow of values of human flourishing in contexts that are influenced by these problems. This presentation is part of our acceptance of this responsibility as we develop our professional learning through collaboration and learning from other professions with living-educational-theories and values of human flourishing.

Our conclusion is in the form of provocations focused on our advocacy that members of the International Professional Development Association and other global educators, should accept a professional and educational responsibility to research their practice and to share their valid, evidence and values-laden explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their practice is located, with values of human flourishing.

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