How Could Living Theory Research Contribute To The Action Research Network Of The Americas?

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Abstract

The Living Theory research contributions to ARNA are focused on the nature of the knowledge being generated by practitioner and other researchers around the world that could be of use in ARNA's evolution. The joint actions in learning with and from each other include enquiring cooperatively with practitioner-researchers around the world. The enquiries can include insights from East Asian Epistemologies, within living-educational-theories. They can also include the inclusion of an Ubuntu way of being from Africa as a value that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity within living cultures of inquiry. The significance of Ñaupaj mampuni as a living legacy from South America with its meaning of towards the future taking the past with us is also considered as is the significance of the posters from the 'virtual presences' in the Town Hall Meeting of ARNA 2015.

Connection to Conference Theme

The generation of the living-theories of practitioner-researchers takes place with joint actions in learning with and from one another in living cultures of enquiry (Delong 2015) within and between international contexts.

Introduction and Purpose

My purpose is to show how living-theories from around the world can contribute to the evolution of ARNA through deepening and extending understandings of Living Theory research.

I use living-theory as an abbreviation of living-educational-theory to mean an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation that influence the practice and explanation. Because not all learning is educational I focus on explanations of educational influence to mean explanations that use, as explanatory principles, the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity and that the individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their life. I am using 'values' in this sense to mean the embodied values that a person uses to give meaning and purpose to their lives and that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Whilst I use value-words, such as freedom, justice, care, compassion and respect, I use these

words to help me to communicate the meanings of the embodied expressions of values as these are clarified and evolve in practice.

The distinction between a living-theory and Living Theory research is important because of important differences in meaning. I am thinking of differences in expressions of meaning through concepts and expressions of meaning in the embodied lived experience of practitioners. Conceptual principles can distinguish Living Theory research as a paradigmatic activity. I mean this in the sense that such research can be recognised to be within a conceptual framework. However, no living-theory can be defined by the conceptual framework of Living Theory research. This is because each living-theory is unique. Each makes an original contribution to educational knowledge. The originality is in the unique constellation of values and understandings that constitute who the individual is, together with their unique and creative responses to their biographical and sociohistorical and socioculture contexts. Hence the important distinction between a living-theory and Living Theory research.

I am suggesting that the inclusion of the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity, within the living-theories of practitioner-researchers, could be part of each individual's creative response to economic rationalism and globalisation. I am thinking here of the economic rationality that can lead to de-valuation and de-moralisation. and reduced what is important in being human, to economic criteria (McTaggart, 1992, p. 50).

I am thinking of a creative response that insists on including a form of accountability and self-evaluation that is based on living as fully as one can the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. This is not to deny the importance of economic well-being. It is in fact to recognise the importance of economic well-being, whilst resisting the imposition of economic rationality, as if this is the only value in what matters in being human. In my experience, a capacity to remain open to dialogue and to understanding others, whilst being influenced by economic rationality is necessary to deepening and extending the influence of educational processes in the second decade of the 21st Century.

I am thinking here of the educational processes of extending and deepening an individual's explanation of their educational influence as they enquire into the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my particular context?' This extension and deepening could include the integration into one's living-educational-theory of insights drawn from the knowledge of other people and cultures. For instance, Inoue (2012; 2014)) brings into his work ideas from psychology, action research and non-Western cultures.

Another idea that could be brought into Living Theory research is the African, relational way of being of Ubuntu. An English translation of 'I am because we are" is often used to emphasise the relationally dynamic nature of Ubuntu. I am suggesting that Living Theory researchers with Afro-Caribbean heritage, such as Charles (2007) and Phillips (2011), with their explicit valuing of Ubuntu in their living-theories have

shown how these ideas could be brought into the Action Research Network of the Americas. Nelson Mandela has given more details of Ubuntu:
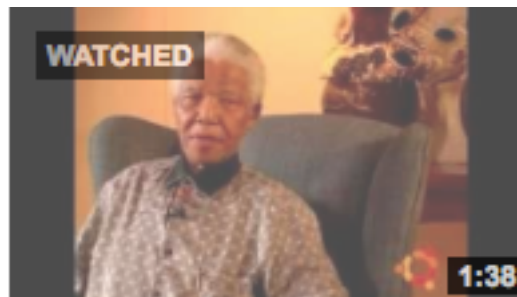
I am suggesting that we use i~we and i~we~I, as the nomenclature for communicating this quality of relationship of Ubuntu with ~ to emphasize the mutual influence of the 'I' and the 'We'. The mutual influence is important because as well as 'I am because we are', 'We are because I am'. This mutual influence can be represented as i~we~i:

> The self that is researched is not an egotistical 'I' but a self that is distinct,
>
> unique *and* relational. A sense of self is similar to that expressed by an
>
> African sense of Ubuntu often communicated in the phrase, 'I am because we
>
> are', together with the phrase 'We are because I am'. We represent this as
>
> 'i~we~i'. We use 'i' and 'we' to point to a relationship where individuals and

collectives are neither subordinated nor dominant but exist in an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship. We use ~ to stand for living-boundaries (Huxtable, 2012): trustworthy, respectful, co-creative space, where individuals, collectives and the complex worlds of practice, knowledge and socio-historical cultures they inhabit and embody, touch. (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2015, p. 1)

A further idea that could be brought into Living Theory research was introduced by Fernando Galindo during a sabbatical from his University in Boliva, at the University of Bath. Fernando introduced the Inca expression of *Ñaupaj mampuni* as a living legacy from South America with its meaning of towards the future taking the past with us. This idea is embodied in Quechua, the language of the Inca's now spoken in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Columbia and Argentina.

This idea could be particularly relevant to the development of the Action Research Network of the Americas, with the recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledges in generating the future of ARNA.

The paper is organised in terms of:

1) Rationale and Theoretical Framework
2) Data and Sources of Evidence and Analysis
3) Findings, Conclusions, Reflections

1) Rationale and Theoretical Framework

i) Rationale.

The rationale is focused on the need to include and go beyond the important clarification and establishing the academic legitimacy of the knowledge being generated by educational action-researchers. These contributions to knowledge are significant in the epistemological terms of the units of appraisal, standards of judgment and logics of the explanations of educational influences in learning.

This paper recognises the importance of this clarification and legitimacy within the rationale of this paper that is focused on researching the spreading influence of Living Theory research. At the heart of this influence is enhancing the flow of values and understandings that are contributing to the flourishing of humanity.

ii) Theoretical Framework.

The idea of a theoretical framework can be used to provide foundational principles for researchers from different traditions of scholarship and enquiry. My initial introduction to educational theory between 1968-70 was on the Academic Diploma Course at the Institute of Education of London University. The theoretical framework that underpinned this course was that educational theory was constituted by the disciplines of the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. A mistake in this approach was recognized by Paul Hirst, one of its main proponents, when he wrote that the disciplines approach to educational theory held that the practical principles used by practitioners to explain their educational influences were at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice

that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more theoretical justification. In acknowledging this mistake, Hirst acknowledges that:

> …rationally defensible practical principles, must of their nature stand up to practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate. (Hirst, 1983, p. 18)

The idea of a theoretical framework in a traditional view of knowledge, usually involves a conceptual framework with methods of validation. Explanations of an individual's educational influences in learning are to be 'derived' from the abstract, general principles in a theory. I am making the contentious claim that no theoretical framework of this kind can generate a valid explanation for my (or your) educational influences in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which the practice is located. If I am correct, it has profound implications for what counts as an educational theory. In 1985 I put forward the idea of a living form of educational theory and then in 1989 formalized this into the idea of an individual creating their own living-educational-theory.

> The theory is constituted by the practitioners' public descriptions and explanations of their own practice. The theory is located not solely within these accounts but in the relationship between the accounts and the practice. It is this relationship, which constitutes the descriptions and explanations as a living form of theory. In being generated from the practices of individuals it has the capacity to relate directly to those practices. (Whitehead, 1989)

The notion of a living form of theory – that is one that evolves – can differ from a living-theory. A living-theory is distinguished by an individual's ontological and relational values that are clarified as they emerge and evolve in practice. The creation of such living-theories are not implicit within an action research methodology. Original contributions to knowledge cannot be made, simply by applying a methodology. A Living Theory researcher goes beyond methodological limits in the generation of original contributions to knowledge. The researcher's unique constellation of values form the explanatory principles in an explanation of influence and the living standards of judgment that are used to evaluate the validity of the contribution to educational knowledge.

Living Theory researchers can draw insights from action research, such as the use of action-reflection cycles, but a Living Theory researcher must transcend the methodological limits of action research in generating an original contribution to educational knowledge.

I have clarified a distinction between Living Theory research and a living-educational-theory, as I describe in the introduction.

Rather than a traditional notion of a 'theoretical framework' that is static I prefer a notion of a 'framing' that is relational and dynamic. This is not to deny the importance of the theoretical frameworks of traditional forms and fields of knowledge. Insights

from these are included within a living-educational-theory but I am claiming that none of the conceptual frameworks of these theories, either individually or in any combination can generate a valid explanation of the educational influence of an individual. My claim is that such a valid explanation requires the individual to generate their own explanation, drawing insights from the theoretical frameworks of traditional forms and fields of scholarship and theory.

For example Inoue's (2012, 2015) theoretical framework can provide a rationale for integrating insights from East Asian Epistemologies into Western traditions of action research with Whitehead's (2014) ideas on enacting educational reflexivity contributing to the theoretical framing of a Living Theory researcher.

In Mirrors of the Mind, Inoue (2012) introduces Western readers to the language of East Asian Epistemology through the meanings of **Ba** – a communicate space for co-developing a new understanding; **Kizuki** as a path to embrace mindfulness in our lives, for new world views; **Omoi** as an integrated form of feeling, thinking and passion developed by going through challenges and collective experiences; **Takumi** as a skill that involves deep wisdom on how to do things well in a professional practice; **Kizuna** as an enduring bond between people; **Chi** is the energy that sustains your life or the life force that motivates you to act in the world.

Another example of integrating traditional theoretical frameworks would be the inclusion of a process of validation derived from Habermas' (1976) ideas in a validated explanation of educational influence in learning. In his work on

communication and the evolution of society, Habermas claims that we make four validity claims in reaching an understanding with each other related to comprehensibility, truth, rightness and authenticity. My creative response to these ideas has been to advocate and use validation groups of between 3-8 people in a process of democratic evaluate that responds to questions that are focused on draft explanations:

i)   How could I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?

ii)   How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions or claims to know?

iii)   How could I deepen and extend the sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings that influence my practice and explanations?

iv)   How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation to show that I am living my espoused values as fully as possible?

2) Data and Sources of Evidence and Analysis

i)   Data

The distinction I make between data and evidence is that data is information whilst evidence is constituted by data that is used in making a claim to know something. It may be confusing to say that the same resource can be used as data, as evidence and as a source of analysis, but here is how it can be done.

The data drawn on this paper include:

- The living-educational-theories published in the Educational Journal of Living Theories between 2008-2014 at http://ejolts.net

- Over 50 living-theory masters and doctoral degrees legitimated in various academics throughout the world between 1996-2014 at:

  http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml

  and

  http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml

- The September 2013 and January 2016 issues of Gifted Education International.

- The living-posters presented in the Town Hall Meeting of the 2015 Action Research Network of the Americas Conference at:

- http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNAposterhomepage230415.pdf - see the posters created by Living Theory researchers below.

The posters are part of my data gathering in which I am using an action-reflection cycle:

1) What do I want to improve? What is my values-based concern? Why am I concerned?

2) Imagining possibilities and choosing one of them to act on in an action plan.

3) As I am acting what data will I collect to enable me to judge my educational influence in my professional context as I answer my question?

4) Evaluating the influence of the actions in terms of values and understandings.

5) Modifying concerns, ideas and actions in the light of evaluations.

I shall say more about this action-reflection cycles in the section below on sources of analysis.

ii) Sources of evidence.

The same resources used as data can also provide sources of evidence of nature and spreading influence of Living Theory research and living-educational-theories. Each of the masters and doctoral degrees in the data section above have been legitimated by a University as making a contribution to educational knowledge. So, all of these resources provide evidence of the academic legitimacy of Living Theory research and living-educational theories.

iii) Sources of analysis.

The same resources used as sources of data and evidence can be sources of analysis for use by members of the Action Research Network of the Americas as practitioner-researchers are learning with and from others. Each of the living-theories in the data section above includes an analysis in terms of the individual researchers

educational influences in their own learning and in the learning of others. Some have extended the analysis into an explanation of educational influence in the learning of the social formation in which the practice is located.

Other texts can provide sources of analysis. Coombs, Potts and Whitehead (2014) have offered an analysis of the significance of living-global-citizenship from living-theories. This analysis emerged from Potts' original work on living-citizenship (Potts, 2012).

Sources of analysis of the living-theories of action researchers, contributing to the Action Research Network of the Americas, include a round table conversation at the Inaugural Conference of ARNA in 2013 on 'Creativity And Criticism In The Growth Of Educational Knowledge From Researching One's Own Practice.' (http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwarnaprop13.pdf)

Sources of analysis include the 'framing' paper, produced by Jacqueline Delong (2015) for the Town Hall Meeting on the 8th May 2015 at the 2015 Action Research Network of the Americas Conference in Toronto.

Sources of analysis include the posters below from researchers and networks developing educational knowledge, theory, practice and opportunities that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. These include individuals and networks from India, Canada, Republic of Ireland, Britain, Croatia, Norway, Australia, Albania, Denmark,

the USA and South Africa. The posters were created and offered in response to a request to contribute to a Town Hall Meeting of the Action Research Network of the Americas Conference on the 8th May 2015, in Toronto:

> ….a pdf of an attractive A4 'flier' 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 - approximately 2-3 minute video-clip on YouTube of you and which communicates the essentials of your: context; interests; values as the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment to which you hold yourself accountable in your practice; research passions. (Send the original in whatever programme you have used to create your poster as well as pdf please)

Here are the responses at:

http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNAposterhomepage230415.pdf

By opening this pdf file you can access the individual and networking living-posters, as well as the video-clips from the individuals and networks. The posters, as a source of analysis, can contribute new understandings of relationally dynamic contributions to practice and knowledge. These contributions can help to explain how the educational influences of Living Theory research and the living-educational-theories of individuals are enhancing a global movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity. This claim is addressed further in the following section on findings, conclusions and reflections.

3) Findings, Conclusions, Reflections

    i)   Findings.

The sources of data, evidence and analysis provided above, have made the case,

beyond reasonable doubt, that it is possible for individuals to generate their own

living-educational-theories that have been granted academic legitimacy in the

Academy, as contributions and original contributions to knowledge. These living-

educational-theories have established the academic legitimacy of an educational

epistemology that includes the unit of appraisal of an individual's explanation of their

educational influence. It includes living, values-laden standards of judgment that are

clarified and evolved in the course of their emergence in practice. It includes the

living logic (Whitehead, 2013) of each practitioner-researcher as they generate their

unique living-educational-theory. The living logic shows the mode of thought that

they use to comprehend their educational influences as rational. The logic of an

explanation is important because it is the mode of thought that is appropriate

comprehending the real as rational (Marcuse, 1964, p. 105). Much scholarly writing

in Western Academies continues to be dominated by Aristotelian logic that

eliminates contradictions from correct thought. For 2,500 years formal logicians and

dialecticians question the rationality of each other's logic (Marcuse, 1964, p. 111;

Popper, 1963, p. 316). The living-logics of Living Theory researchers do not reject

the rationality of either formal or dialectical logicians. They draw insights from

explanations that are structured by these logics, in the generation of their own living-

theory. They embody and express ontological and relational values in their explanations of educational influence with living-logics that appear consistent with a naturally inclusive logic for environmental and educational accountability (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

The posters also provide evidence to support the finding of the continuing spreading influence of Living Theory research in enhancing the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

ii) Conclusions.

This interim conclusion is focused on the practices and knowledges being generated through joint action in learning with and from one another.

The above poster, presented in the Town Hall Meeting of ARNA 2015, shows how the generation of living-educational-theories, by individuals and networks can offer ways of evolving and enhancing the educational influences of ARNA with values, such as living-global-citizenship and living-cultures-of-inquiry (Delong, 2015) that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

iii) Reflections.

Most of my professional life at the University of Bath (1973-2012) was focused on bringing sufficient living-educational-theories into the Academy to transform the unit of appraisal, standards of judgment and logics that defined what counted as educational knowledge. Having accomplished this to my satisfaction, my attention

has turned to spreading the educational influence of Living Theory research in local, regional, national and global contexts. In relation to my action-reflection cycle my question is, 'How do I improve my contribution to spreading the educational influence of Living Theory research?'

The reason for my concern is that I continue to believe that at the heart of Living Theory research is the responsibility of the individual practitioner-researcher to live their values and understandings as fully as possible. This responsibility includes the sharing of their explanations of their educational influences in learning from one another within a process of democratic evaluation. I am claiming that the expression of this responsibility will contribute to the growing educational influence and contributions to educational knowledge of the Action Research Network of the Americas as we strengthen our joint actions in learning with and from one another. The creation, gathering and sharing of our living posters offer educational opportunities for joint action in learning with and from one another and for demonstrating how Living Theory researchers can contribute to the Action Research Network of the Americas.

In contributing to the Town Hall Meeting at ARNA 2015, I am working to bring into a connection, individuals and networks of Living-Theory researchers in an educational process of learning of how to extend and deepen the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

I shall evaluate my influence as I work at living my values and understandings as fully as possible in terms of the academic legitimacy of new living-standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996). I am thinking here of these standards in terms of the relational and ontological values that are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence by individuals and in networks. I shall also evaluate my influence in terms of evidence that relates to the sustained and evolving connections of the 'virtual presences' in the text, images and videos of the posters of individuals and networks in enhancing the influence of Living Theory research.

My intention is to share my evaluation with participants in the Town Hall meeting of ARAN 2015 and with other interested practitioner-researchers in the process of democratic evaluation described above and to use the responses to strengthen the validity of my living-educational-theory. I want to emphasise the uniqueness of the form of each individual's living-theory as there is often cultural pressure within Universities to explain the influence of an individual from within the conceptual frameworks of abstract theories, rather than seeing that a living-theory cannot be comprehensively explained by any conceptual theory.

So, to return to my question, *How could Living Theory research contribute to the Action Research Network of the Americas?* I have offered my own contribution to answering this question and I am hoping that you will share your own.

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