

How do I improve what I am doing with a living theory praxis in engaging with issues of poverty?

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Abstract

There has been much discussion in BERA about the appropriate forms of representation for the educational theories generating by practitioner-researchers in their educational research. Contributions to Research Intelligence have suggested that an epistemological transformation is underway in the living-educational-theories being produced by practitioner-researchers with multimedia narratives. The importance of focusing on values by educational researchers has also been recognized. Hence the focus in this presentation is on the principles of value within a form of praxis that engages with issues of poverty.

In this self-study of my professional practice as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher developing *inclusive* gifted and talented *educational* theory, practice and provision, I explicate the relationally dynamic standards of judgment that can be used to validate and legitimate in the Academy, the embodied educational knowledge of practitioner-researchers who are engaging with issues of poverty that are sustained by economic rationalism.

Introduction

The theme of the AERA 2013 annual conference was broadly conceived, ‘to include the ways that education theory, research, policy, and praxis contribute to alleviating economic, intellectual and moral poverty.’ However, Tierney (AERA president), a social scientist, is concerned more with education rather than educational theory. He sets the scene for understanding the limitations of the influence that AERA was concerned with when he began his brief introduction by saying that in America, ‘Education is a way out of poverty and a way into the middle class and upper class.’ - <http://vimeo.com/41718455>.

AERA exemplifies the problem where the language used is that of economic rationalism:

‘Poverty interacts with education through local, national, and international systems of financial markets and the global knowledge economy. The interdependencies embodied in globalization and the deep inequities created and maintained by globalization play a substantial role in the lives of marginalized communities and the educational organizations that serve them. We are eager to engage scholars from around the world in considering how education research can contribute to alleviating poverty and how academics might be complicit in maintaining class structures. We seek to understand better how local efforts to alleviate poverty through education interact, or do not, with international assessment efforts (e.g., PISA, TIMMS, IEA).

Finally, we see other poverties at work in and around education. A moral poverty all too frequently pervades discussion of the public and private benefits of educating undocumented youth, for example. An environment of artistic impoverishment exists in schools that offer few or no opportunities to develop creative talent and aesthetic appreciation. Technology creates a digital divide across students, teachers, and schools; it also has the potential to bridge divides of economic capital through digitally mediated education that connects rural and urban students to rich educational resources outside the classroom walls. The theme signals that we must engage and examine the complexities of poverty, as well as challenge oversimplifications in how we study and address poverty and its consequences.’

Even though the claim is to explore notions of poverty that are not concerned with money the deep frame evoked is one that permeates and dominates the discourse. Tierney shows the problem in the quotation from a student’s essay:

‘I thought America was a land of riches and pleasures because of what I had seen in the movies. It proved to be the opposite.

... America is not a land of riches for those of us who live in [my neighborhood], but it can be a land of opportunities for everyone: success is up to me...

I want to change the world. Not only do I want to see a decrease in violence, but I also want to learn as much as I can so that I can help others.’

The student and Tierney are trapped by their language and implicit assumptions into thinking that they have answered the questions, ‘what is success?’, ‘what is meant by helping others?’ and ‘how do we judge success and failure?’

When Reiss and White (2013):

‘... suggest that, in the broadest possible terms, education should equip every child:

1. To lead a life that is personally flourishing
2. To help others to do so too.’ (p.4)

They clearly point to the challenges of researching the questions, ‘what is it to lead a life that is personally flourishing?’ and ‘how do we help others to do so too?’ to generate educational theory, practice and provision. This moves the focus on ‘poverty’ with its negative and economic rationalist connotations to one of hopeful optimism for the flourishing of each and all, much as positive psychologists are doing in transforming psychology created from a deficit model, where ‘deficit’ is understood using norm rather than criterion referenced language. The change is not simply one of words but on action: you tend to get what you look for.

Similarly the purpose of educational research and evaluation is to contribute to improving what is done in the present and future in terms of values: it is not to simply justify the past. Being held to account often means to feel the pangs of guilt as looking back I will often see how I might have done things better. That is because I

now have the benefit of hindsight; that most exact of sciences. To say that I can live today with tomorrow's knowledge is obviously absurd, but that is precisely what many approaches to evaluation imply.

My intention in researching to improve what I am doing, as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher, with a living-theory praxis is to engage with a much broader notion of poverty, one that includes notions of emotional, social, and personal 'poverty' and one that moves from norm referenced notions of 'poverty' as Adler-Collins (2013) puts it:

'Poverty, I suggest, is part of a complex set of values that places the individual in a space of judgement. I am rich I am poor by looking at others' lives, possessions and wealth. Such thinking in itself holds the very values that I contest.'

In the process of creating this paper as a contribution to this symposium I am reminded that Living-Theory researchers move with energy that carries hope for a world where humanity can flourish. Developing my living-theory praxis means trying to improve praxis which enriches lives, by keeping connection in practice with my ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and those of an inclusive, emancipating, egalitarian society, values that carry hope for the flourishing, not just the survival, of humanity.

Biesta's ideas (2006) on moving beyond a language of learning into a language of education through the exercise of educational responsibility points to the importance of developing a language of education and Lakoff (2004) to the importance of using language that evokes the deep frames of inclusive values (Crompton, 2010). I am also mindful of Whitehead's (2013) reflection:

'I am focusing on a poverty in print-based academic texts in the omission of visual data that can communicate meanings of energy-flowing values that carry hope for the future of humanity. The omission is serious because of the significance of flows of energy in explanations of anything that we do. The omission of adequate representations of energy-flowing values in explanations of educational influence is serious because as a values-laden practical activity, education necessarily influences the expression of values.'

I therefore want to move the language in this paper from 'engaging with issues of poverty' to 'engaging with issues of a world where humanity can flourish', by communicating embodied meanings through a multimedia account, which includes the language of text, video and image. This is easier said than done, as this response from Je Kan Adler-Collins, to a draft of this paper shows:

'... the ending started me thinking;

My success and failure in contributing to the enrichment of learning and lives will be evidenced by whether I and others grow in ability to develop and enhance talents, expertise and knowledge as gifts to evolve responses life-long individually and in collectives to the question, 'how do i~we live loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile lives, creating, valuing, offering and accepting gifts which

contribute to the well-being and well-becoming of self and others as fully as i~we can?’

I find it interesting that you finish with the paragraph that uses the language you claim not to like. success or failure?? HUUUUUM..Rich or poor, right or wrong???? By your story above your success is in the understanding of your actions , ideas, motivation? I find it strange that you are linking it to what others do? smile.. Why? (personal email 28th August 2013)

I realized the depth of the influence on me of the complex ecology (Lee and Rochon, 2009) in which I live. I still link my understanding of the efficacy of my actions, ideas and motivation to others as I see myself acting within an i~we relationship which is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. However, ‘success’ and ‘failure’ elicit the same deep frame as ‘poverty’, which I want to move beyond, so I have revised the language of the paper and try to be more aware of the necessity of continually critically reflecting on my language in daily conversation with others and myself.

I will now move on to:

- Outlining what constituted my professional practice as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher developing principles of value within Living-theory praxis
- Introducing the notion of inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision that express values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society
- Presenting embodied educational knowledge of practitioner-researchers who are engaging with issues of poverty that are sustained by economic rationalism

My professional practice as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher - Principles of value within Living-theory praxis

The key to understanding my professional practice as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher and my living-theory praxis lies in what distinguishes what is *educational*.

I am assuming that the overarching purpose of developing *educational* theory, research and practice, in whatever field a practitioner is working in, is to contribute to a world in which humanity can flourish. Like Whitehead (2013):

‘I am making the assumption that one of the main purposes of educational researchers is to produce valid explanations for the educational influences of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. I work with a distinction between education researchers and educational researchers. I see education researchers as making contributions to knowledge within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of forms and fields of education, such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, economics, politics, theology, administration, leadership and management of education. I see

educational researchers as making contributions to educational knowledge in valid explanations of educational influences in learning.’

Here I seek to contribute to an educational knowledge base. By specifying educational I am pointing to a knowledge base of theory and practice that contributes to each of us learning to live a loving, satisfying, productive, worthwhile life, which makes this a better world for us all.

Living-Theory provides an approach to research that focuses practitioner-researchers on what they are doing to improve their practice, where ‘improvement’ is tested against their values-based standards of judgment. I understand values to be that which gives my life meaning and purpose and beliefs to be what I believe to be true. The values that are core to Living-Theory research are ontological, energy-flowing, life-affirming, life-enhancing, and intrinsic, which Crompton (2010) describes, as a ‘better source of motivation for engaging in bigger-than-self problems than other values’ (p.9). Crompton, drawing on Schwartz’s work, puts forward two classes of values:

‘Intrinsic values include the value placed on a sense of community, affiliation to friends and family, and self-development. Extrinsic values, on the other hand, are values that are contingent upon the perceptions of others – they relate to envy of ‘higher’ social strata, admiration of material wealth, or power.’ (pp. 9-10)

He argues these act in opposition, and:

‘Intrinsic values are associated with concern about bigger-than-self problems, and with corresponding behaviours to help address these problems. Extrinsic values, on the other hand, are associated with lower levels of concern about bigger-than-self problems and lower motivation to adopt behaviours in line with such concern.’ (p. 10)

Living-Theory is also a particularly appropriate methodology for developing praxis that engages with issues of poverty as it is a form of self-study practitioner research whereby the researcher researches to enhance the educational influence of their ontological and relational ‘i’ in learning and life and in the process generates and makes public values-based explanations for their educational influence in learning, their own, other people’s and of social formations (Whitehead, 1993). They do this by clarifying their values, as they emerge and evolve in the process of enquiry, which form their explanatory principles and living standards of judgement in valid accounts of their practice.

My practice was, and is, concerned with the creation of educational relationships, space and opportunities for the development of talents, expertise and knowledge as educational gifts. The knowledge with which I am particularly concerned is that created, recognised, valued, offered and worked with by learners of the world, themselves, and themselves in and of the world. With respect to educational gifts I focus on enhancing the educational influence each learner has in his or her own learning as thoughtful, thought-full people, knowing themselves, evolving informed aspirations, and developing the confidence and competences to pursue them and able to contribute to their own learning, well-being and well-becoming and that of others. This, I believe, is consistent with my ambition to contribute to each learner’s ability to

evolve responses for themselves to questions of the form, “How do I live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life?”

I understand my contribution to the quality of that educational experience in terms of enhancing the possibility of each learner to extend themselves a loving recognition, establish respectful connectedness and express their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others. I also accept a systemic responsibility to enable a supportive culture that is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. By inclusive I mean an educational context where each person is valued, and where there is an intention to enable all to benefit from, and contribute to, their own learning and that of others as fully as possible. By emancipating I mean that each person is respected as responsible for the educational influence they have in their own learning and life, that of others and society. By egalitarian, I mean a culture where there is an expressed belief in human equality and ‘power’ is expressed *with* rather than *over* other people to make this a better world for each and all.

I have understood praxis to be about doing what is right according to an impersonal criterion. Living-Theory praxis (Huxtable, 2012) is about accepting *my* responsibility to offer valid, values-based, generative and transformational, explanations of the best life I can live for self and others. Values are what I believe to be important and give meaning and purpose to my life, and beliefs are what I believe to be true. Values and beliefs are not always aligned. A person can express a *value* of inclusion – all people are equally of value - and a *belief* that ability is innate and therefore some people are born to lead and others to follow. I find such inconsistencies as challenging as finding that I am not living my values in practice.

It might be argued that Living-Theory praxis is a tautology. However, while Living-Theory may express a particular form of understanding of praxis, not all praxis may be in the form of a living-educational-theory. So, in the same way I talk of ‘a gift freely offered’ to emphasis that what I offer is done so without expectation or obligation, I talk of Living-Educational-Theory praxis to emphasise that:

- My praxis as a living-theory is a form of self-study where ‘i’ is not an egotistical ‘I’ or a discrete entity. ‘i’ is a recognition of a person as real and they have an influence by being
- An account of praxis communicates how the researcher hold themselves to account for their educational influence and for having an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian influence that enhances well-being and well-becoming of each and all
- It includes an explanation of how they give full expression to their educational responsibility for themselves and towards other people and communities
- The embodied knowledge and values of the researcher are clarified and evolve as they emerge and are articulated through the process of rigorous and valid enquiry in living-boundaries
- The life-affirming and life-enhancing ontological and social values of the researcher/s form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment

of educational influence in learning and life of self, other and social formations

- Praxis is created in the living-boundary, the ~ space in, for instance, i~we and the Academy~the-world-of-the-practitioner

To communicate my living-theory praxis generatively and transformationally to others and myself, I need to find forms of representation that contribute to a relationally-dynamic and multidimensional form of research and enhance the communication of energy-flowing values. I deal with this later.

The purpose of Living-Theory praxis as self-study is not to research an egotistical, discrete 'I'. The purpose is to recognise, value, and make visible the individual, unique contribution each person makes to their own lives and that of other people in living-boundaries. The living-boundaries are those between worlds such as Academia and practice and those in the i~we relationship where 'i' is recognised and valued as distinct but not discrete. A living-boundary is one within which something of mutuality and co-creation might be expressed without violating the 'worlds' forming the boundary.

Developing *inclusive* gifted and talented *educational* theory, practice and provision, and values of inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationships

Lakoff (2004) shows that the language we use can embed metaphors of particular values systems and worldviews, which are brought more into being by the words we chose to communicate with. The words 'gifted and talented...' and 'gifts and talents' are exemplars. I understood how loaded these words are when I saw the stony faced response of an audience to my suggestion that Vlad the Impaler had a talent for art. There was no doubt that Vlad demonstrated highly developed artistic expertise but this was clearly not intended for the flourishing of humanity. I realised then that 'talent' is a values-laden word, and communicates values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing. 'Gifts' is similarly a values-laden word.

In my role leading the implementation of a local authority's policy on high-ability learning, I learned to use 'talent' and 'gifts' as life-affirming and life-enhancing constructs. I developed understandings of *inclusive* gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision as concerned with enhancing each and all learners abilities to develop and offer freely; talents, expertise and knowledge, that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. I want to stress the notion of gifts freely offered. A child observed this is not necessarily a common understanding in our culture when she asked:

'Why do we expect someone to say "thank you" when we give them something? Shouldn't we give it to them for free? (Towan, 2004, aged 10, comment during a philosophical enquiry)' (Hymer, Whitehead and Huxtable, 2009, p. 1)

I hope you might appreciate my development of inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision as a creative educational responses to, government and local government policies on gifts and talents in education, which express values of Galton's 19th century world of empire and class (White, 2006).

Through researching my professional practice as an educational psychologist, educator and educational researcher I developed understandings of *inclusive* gifted and talented *educational* theory, practice and provision that chimed with Hymer's. Hymer (2007) shows how he creates a generative-transformational framework for gift creation that engages with notions of enriching lives and learning:

'I articulate in narrative form the meanings of my embodied ontological values through their emergence in my practice – specifically in my practice of philosophy with children, in creating webs of meaning through dilemma-based learning, and in seeking to unmask (Foucault, in Rabinow, 1984) the concept of giftedness – by asking whose interests the concept serves. In the process of living, clarifying and communicating the meanings of these practices are formed, I argue, living epistemological standards of judgement for a new, relationally dynamic epistemology of educational enquiry. I record also how through my professional activity, my reflections on and revisions of this activity, and the process of creating this account, I have moved in the direction of creating and living my core personal and educational values and realising the critical standards of judgment which are both consisting in and attendant on these values. These include the value of individual intellectual respect as a contributor to the creation of generative- transformational giftedness – i.e. giftedness which is co-constructed (not identified) in a social, relationally respectful, activity-oriented, dialectical, tool-and-result (Vygotsky, 1978) manner and context. I make a claim to originality in scholarship in articulating the emergence of the value-laden concept of generative- transformational giftedness and its latent fecundity in and relevance to the field of gifted and talented education. To this end, I suggest an inclusional, non-dualistic alternative to the identification or discovery of an individual's gifts and talents by arguing that activity- and development-centred (not knowing-centred) learning- leading-development (Vygotsky, *ibid.*) environments lead not to the identification of gifts and talents but to their creation.'

Leading the local authority project developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision I worked to generate and enhance inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational relationships, space and opportunities, that provided support and experiences for children and young people to engage in learning journeys and learning adventures that helped them:

- Develop dreams, passion for creating life-affirming and life-enhancing knowledge, and the openness to venture to new cognitive, intellectual, social, personal, physical and emotional places in their learning and which inform their evolving aspirations and vocations
- Explore a variety of possibilities of earning a living they might find satisfying, productive and worthwhile if they devoted time and energy to them as an adult
- Develop confidence and competences to pursue their evolving aspirations through enquiring and creating talents, expertise and knowledge as gifts in areas of personal passion and interest

- Experience educational relationships where they, the gifts they create, and their contributions to their own learning, the learning of others and to their communities are valued
- Learn to extend themselves a loving recognition, develop respectful connectedness with diverse persons, and give expression to an educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and social formations
- Explore and evolve understandings of what for them would make their life feel loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile, and to create knowledge of themselves in and of the world.

Text alone does not communicate well enough the principles of value within a form of praxis that engages with issues of poverty in developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision. So I now want to give living meaning to my words by a multimedia narrative of the embodied knowledge of some of those I worked with.

The embodied educational knowledge of practitioner-researchers who are engaging with issues of poverty that are sustained by economic rationalism

My work leading the development of *inclusive* gifted and talented *educational* theory, practice and provision across a local authority came to an end in August 2012. Changes in government education policy, strategy and funding meant many local authority educational projects were ended, mine being one. As I brought the work to a conclusion I was reminded that there was a great deal of knowledge, experience and expertise created in the community since I first began to develop the project in the late 90's and a number of people provoked me to think - how could I bring the project known as APEX (All as Able Pupils Extending Opportunities) to a generative conclusion so that what had been created over some 15 and more years might contribute to enriching the ground for the future? In the introduction to a book (Henon, 2012) I commissioned, as one of the vehicles for this last enterprise, I wrote:

‘How could APEX legacies contribute to improving the educational experience of learners beyond its end?’

I am aware of how easily the past can become a straightjacket of the future; this is one of the reasons I have resisted disseminating the numerous pre-packaged answers produced by government agencies, academics and various enterprises. Packages too easily become formulaic in their application and the essence of what was important educationally can be missed, lost or at worst destroyed, in the process. I didn't want any aspect of APEX to become such a package but I was puzzled as to how to bring APEX to a generative conclusion. The work of Andrew Henon and Catherine Forrester, brought together, inspired a thought that has culminated in the production of this book, which I hope provides a creative, and energising answer.’ (Huxtable, 2012b, p.04)

I believe that an explanation of my educational influence that draws on the book and the process of its creation can help me to clarify and communicate something of my learning and energy flowing ontological and social values, that engage with issues of

poverty. My ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society were clarified as they emerged through my doctoral research (Huxtable, 2012) and were the bedrock of the development of educational responses to government and local policies on gifts and talents in education and formed living standards of judgment by which I held myself professionally, as well as personally, to account.

The book comprises accounts that the editor, Andrew Henon, drawing on his socially engaged practice as artist, elicited from children, young people, parents, teachers, professionals from many fields and worlds and wove together to form a multimedia web-based book. The cover exemplifies the multilayered nature of the book as Andrew writes:

The cover of, 'Living Legacies: the APEX story and living accounts', shows two images merged. On the left are children of St Aldhelms Primary School, empowered by the lens of a digital camera to face us with expressions full of joy and intrigue.

'The central image below taken by Karen Dews is of the screen of a video camera taking footage of the adult learning enquires and living legacy workshop at Fry's. They are merged to create and represent the layers and depth of educational learning that is possible if we apply the approaches and 'Living Educational Theory' at the centre of our practice and as an ongoing motivational life affirming process.

I have merged the images to give a sense of layering abstraction representational of the complex ecologies of learning undertaken through the APEX programme.' (Henon, 2012b, p.2)



Andrew enabled each person to recognize themselves and express their educational responsibility for their own learning, and to make their unique educational contribution to the learning of APEX, as a social formation. Andrew took considerable care not to violate the integrity of the individual voice in bringing them together in a manner that was respectful of the connections made to produce an artifact with an authentic, harmonious voice. I could see within the way the book was created and its execution my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility expressed within an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian community.

When I began APEX I realized that to have an educational influence in the learning of children and young people I had to attend to the embodied learning of adults who, as professionals involved in education, have a direct influence on the educational learning of the young. As Ginott (1972) so eloquently put it:

‘I have come to the frightening conclusion: I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanised or dehumanised.’ (p. 15 and 16)

I believe that we tend to do to others as is done to us, and we do to ourselves, so I tried to treat with adults through APEX in the manner I wanted children and young people to experience. It was, and is, as important to me that I should live my ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and social values of an emancipating, egalitarian and inclusive society, with adults as it was, and is, in my direct dealings with children and young people.

While words in the form of the multimedia, web-based book communicate something of the values that form my explanation, it is my belief that video communicates more of the energy flowing nature of my values. So I will also draw on another of the artifacts I commissioned, a 3.16 minute video montage filmed and edited by Ed Collings-Wells, accessible from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cu3C1Rk6c8>.

The usual way of evaluating workshops/events/learning opportunities for children and young people is to ask them what they thought. The problem for me is that gives a very limited and distorted picture. First, most children and young people have not been taught to reflect on and develop their understanding of their educational progress. Second, how do we know what will make a significant contribution to our life-long journey at the time. So, while I used feedback sheets to get a feel for whether the APEX opportunities provided enjoyable experiences and the children and young people felt inspired to explore further their responses are of very limited use in knowing whether I was providing the educational quality of experience I was intending. If you watch the video montage I believe you may sense, as I do, the enthusiasm of the young people for participating. I also hope you have a sense of the expression of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society.



Two girls at 0.40 say what so many have said, not only about the Summer Opportunity but also about other APEX activities for children and young people

- My favourite thing about APEX is making new friends.

- My favourite thing about APEX is you get to try new things

What they don't recognize is the influence of the embodied values and beliefs communicated by the adults working with them. That is why here I draw on the story of one of those adults to help me communicate the explanation of my educational influence in learning and lives. There is so much I want to draw on but for the purpose of this paper I will be limit myself to point to the contributions of Michelle Rochester. Michelle has been part of APEX for a long time, contributed to the book and was part of the concluding events of the project, including the finale, and contributed to the video montage of 'The Spirit of APEX'. Her stories help me show what I wanted to achieve through APEX and the process of creating an artifact as a tangible expression of the living legacies of the project.

Michelle's story in the book gives me heart that I might have been successful, at least once, in having the educational influence that I want to have in learning and life as she writes:

'Before writing my "Story" I asked others "Why do I do what I do – What has driven me to dedicate my life to helping children"? To my surprise their answers were not the same as mine. This forced me to rethink and reanalyse my motivations and career path. . Having experienced a childhood fraught with neglect, abuse and violence and adolescence fuelled with drugs, money and more aggression my story begins with the studying of a Martial Art.

Aikido provided me with a vision for something outside myself, something I could strive for that was not tangible, and something that came with only an internal reward... Aikido helped believe I not only could I do more, I could be more. Since stopping my formal training in Aikido many years ago I continue to watch, read and listen to bodies all around me. Aikido gave me the personal skills I needed to enrol to become a primary teacher. Jaded and overwhelmed with the tediousness of school teaching I was lucky to have found a subject that kept me challenged and engaged – This was when I began to dance! Dance forced me to be even softer, to be able to deal with personal issues, release and express my inner-self in order to be a better person inside and outside of the dance studio.'....

My first APEX Summer School allowed me to trial this person centred approach. I was armed with all my dance, choreographic and lesson tools but I was willing to face a group of eager students and ask them "How can we make a dance about.... how can this particular music influence what we do? How do we know we are successful? These basic questions wove throughout the 4 days of discovery. I felt that this was the beginning my way working. Giving the ownership of learning over to the pupils allowed me to observe and appreciate the learners' prior knowledge. This is now a tool I always use as it saves time, for instance, instead of asking a series of blanket questions to a whole group in order to establish their prior learning, if we simply get on with a task their prior learning is evident quite quickly.' (Rochester, 2012, pp.34-35)

Michelle goes on to give an account of her influence in the learning and life of a boy who was going through a challenging time in his life-journey.

Michelle shows me that she was expressing her loving recognition of herself and her pupils, developing relationships of respectful connectedness, and expressing her educational responsibility for herself and towards her pupils. I have a sense of how she is living the values of an emancipating, egalitarian and inclusive society, where each is empowered to, 'believe I not only could I *do* more, I could *be* more' (my emphasis).

Michelle was appointed with Belinda to run a module on the last APEX Summer and it is that experience that is caught on the video montage (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cu3C1Rk6c8>) where she and Belinda tell the filmmaker what APEX is about for them. Here is some of the transcript:

2.03 Belinda 'For me this year has been my second year with APEX and my first chance to collaborate with another provider. So I recon with Michelle this year was really exciting because it was something I never explored before. So being able to take my passion with language and bring it into a dance context was really, really exciting. Bit frightening. But its been nice to fuse those ideas together and learn from the way Michelle teaches which is slightly different to the way I work to put those ideas together.

2.34 Michelle Yes, I would agree. It's nice working with someone else because you can really bounce. There's been so many times when you surprise yourself and come up with choreographic ways of doing it (2.42) and it's been really nice working together. For me APEX has been, hum, has underpinned my work for some time in the sense that I went to a school very unplanned and its very child centered.'

Michelle is voicing her educational responsibility towards herself, her colleague and the children. There are moments, for instance, at 2.14. 2.22 and 2.41 when I get a sense of the loving recognition and respectful connectedness flowing between them. They are brief moments frozen in these still images but it is the movement of them both that gives me a sense of the energy flow that is integral to understanding the embodied values lived and living of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society.

2.14



2.22



2.41



Concluding thoughts

As a contribution to the symposium I researched through this paper, ‘How do I improve what I am doing with a living theory praxis in engaging with issues of poverty?’ I used Living-Theory as a form of values-based educational research and offered explanations of educational influence and living standards of judgement that include the clarification and communication of energy flowing ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society.

In his paper for this symposium Je Kan Adler-Collins wrote

‘We must collectively co-create through our mutual discovery of each other a form of knowing that will influence the future each of us takes.’

I believe that in the text, video and still images I offer evidence of collective co-creation through mutual discovery of self and each other within an i~we relationship that has influenced a future that has now become part of the past. The collective ‘we’ here has been variously represented. For instance, the ‘we’ comprising Michelle and Belinda, where each expresses their mutual discover of each other and them self. I have also presented APEX as a form of collective ‘we’ and the expression of mutual discovery of self and each other within the pages of, *APEX Living Legacies: Stories creating futures*’ (Henon, 2012). My hope, is that this paper might stimulate others to

co-create and gift their living theory praxis in living-boundaries between worlds of diverse cultures, histories and ways of knowing, as Potts, Coombs and Whitehead point to:

‘We believe that the global perspective of citizenship occupies a description of humanity itself. Indeed, humanity described in terms of its rich cultural differences and contributions to a twenty-first century world. So a global citizen can be understood in terms of cultural origins, exchange and development. Moreover, the ability of an emerging global citizen to appreciate other cultures and societies and move towards a common shared set of values and understanding is a valuable goal. This global appreciation of other cultures, traditions and values is something we argue as ‘cultural empathy’. Cultural empathy is both a social policy and act of humanity and when combined with our notion of living citizenship helps us to define what we mean by ‘living global citizenship’. Cultural empathy also helps us to celebrate and appreciate the richness of ‘cultural difference’ as promoted by Fran Martin (2012) and others (Andreotti 2011, Todd 2008). ‘ (Potts, Coombs & Whitehead, 2013)

and so contribute to the flourishing of humanity worldwide.

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