

# **Living-educational-theories as Transformational Continuing Professional Development**

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## **Abstract**

An international continuing professional development (CPD) project, 'Living Values Improving Practice Cooperatively' has been established in response to the need to enhance professionalism in education with flexibility in offering content, tuition, assessment for accreditation and costings of programmes of continuing professional development. This is a research project for leaders, teachers and other professionals, from a variety of fields, who are committed to improving the life-chances and well-being of individuals and communities and to enhancing the professional knowledge-base of education, by enquiring individually, collaboratively and co-operatively into the processes of improving their practice and knowledge-creation in the creation of living-educational-theories. We understand these theories to be the explanations that individuals produce to explain their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work and research.

## **Introduction**

We make a clear distinction between education research and educational research. We see education research being conducted within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of disciplines of education. We see educational research producing validated explanations of educational influence of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work and research.

The CPD we are concerned with is that which makes a transformational contribution to the educational knowledge-base and practice of individuals and the profession.

Whitehead's vocation is to contribute to the professionalism of educators by extending and transforming the knowledge-base of education by bringing accounts into the academy for legitimation at Masters and doctoral level. This is consistent and complementary with Huxtable's desire to improve the educational experience and opportunities of children and young people by supporting educators to recognise, value and research their practice in order to improve it, with the belief that their embodied pedagogy is shaped by their own experiences with learners in recognising, accepting and expressing their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and the profession.

We shall present evidence to show that supporting educators to learn and experience creating educational knowledge and the development of educational learning, relationships and opportunities through research, can enable educators them to engage in transformational CPD. A generative stage of research is in the process of

creating accounts that communicates to others. An educator by engaging in research as CPD therefore that transforms and contributes to their own educational knowledge base and practice and that of the profession in the process of presenting their work for legitimation by the Academy at Masters and Doctoral level. Presenting accounts for legitimation by the Academy also enables the researcher to feel recognised as a knowledge-creator by institutions with national and international status.

The government until now has wholly or partially funded many Masters degrees for educators, comprising tuition, content and legitimation. We show how such work can be continued and extended given the increasing pressures on universities from economic rationalists with market place models. We draw evidence for this from accounts of the living-theories legitimated at Masters level by two universities and made more widely public through journals such as Gifted Education International (GEI) and the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs).

Whitehead (1967) first stated his commitment to enhancing professionalism in education in a special study on his initial teacher education programme on ‘The Way To Improving Professionalism In Education?’ He also focused on improving research-based professionalism in his 1988 Presidential Address to BERA (Whitehead, 1989) and on relating research to practice in his keynote to the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Teacher Education (Whitehead 2013). He is continuing, with Huxtable, to express his commitment to contribute to enhancing professionalism in education through his writings, for instance, ‘Living-Educational-Theory Research as Transformatory Continuing Professional Development’ (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013), developing web-based resources, contributing to conferences, providing workshops and supporting Masters and Doctoral students and educational practitioners in a range of fields researching their practice.

In 2005 we began working together to provide support in a Masters programme for educators who wanted to engage in CPD by researching their practice to improve it through creating explanations of their educational influences in learning. The pedagogy of the Masters programme was not the traditional one with a series of lectures and workshops followed by an assignment to be submitted that showed that knowledge had been acquired and applied. The pedagogy was that of research. In the September 2013 issue of Gifted Education International we explain our understanding of and answer the question, *What is a research approach to improving practice?* We explain the significance of action-reflection cycles in creating a and of creating multi-media narratives of explanations of educational influence. We also describe the process we use to strengthen the validity of multi-media narratives with questions derived from Habermas’s (1976, pp. 2-3) four criteria of social validity. Having already published this account (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013) we do not wish to repeat ourselves here.

What we are focusing on in this presentation is the international CPD project and praxis for clarifying and communicating the nature of the ethical principles that establish a practitioner-researcher’s account as ‘educational’.

### **Living Values Improving Practice Cooperatively: An international CPD project**

The project is grounded in the assumption that each individual has talents that could be developed in learning that enhances the individual’s well-being and the well-being

of others in living loving and productive lives in enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ The participants are committed to living as fully as possible, in the creation of their living-educational-theories, the personal and co-operative values as described by PIRC (2011) and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity.

Professional Masters programmes have been created as higher levels of ‘training’, over the years providing teachers and others with further qualifications. The traditional way of ‘delivering’ training has been through lectures with pre-packaged content. The learners’ ‘surface learning’ (West Burnham, 2006) has been assessed by the field ‘knowledge’ being reflected back to the lecturer in the form of module assignments. Evidence that the student might have gone to the higher levels of learning (e.g. Bloom, 1956) has been sought in the form of a dissertation, in which the student evidences they can analyse, evaluate and synthesise field knowledge.

A Masters programme requires that the learner accept their responsibility for themselves as knowledge creators contributing to the knowledge base of educational and professional practice. Assignments require that the student critically and creatively draws on the knowledge created by others in their field as well as the Academy in the course of researching their practice explain their educational influence in learning. Submitting their ‘Assignments’ and finally their dissertation as accounts of their explanations of their educational influence in learning for accreditation at Masters level both helps keep the important in focus amongst the urgent daily pressures they experience and as a form of validation, working with Habermas’s (1976) notion of validation including does it communicate, is there sufficient evidence to support the claims I am making, have I given sufficient to show the complex ecology (Lee and Rochon, 2009) which includes the field and academic knowledge, practice, self etc) as the normative background of my research, and is there sufficient evidence for you to know whether I have been authentic in my claims to be living my ontological and social values in practice – that is my values clarified in their emergence through my research do form my living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) of my practice.

Living Theory research is transformational practice in the sense that embodied knowledge of field, practice and self are the subject of research to create new knowledge of improving practice. Our focus on living values can be related to The Case for Working with our Cultural Values (Crompton, 2010) and The Common Cause Handbook (PIRC, 2011):

Values represent our guiding principles: our broadest motivations, influencing the attitudes we hold and how we act.

In both action and thought, people are affected by a wide range of influences. Past experience, cultural and social norms, and the money at our disposal are some of the most important. Connected to all of these, to some extent, are our values – which represent a strong guiding force, shaping our attitudes and behaviour over the course of our lives. Our values have been shown to influence our political persuasions, our willingness to participate in political action, our career choices; our ecological footprints; the amount of resources we use, and for what people; and our feelings of personal wellbeing. (PIRC, 2011, p. 8)

We agree with these statements about values from the Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC). When we refer to values as explanatory principles and living standards of judgment, to which we hold ourselves accountable, we are thinking of the values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives and work.

We use values and framing in similar ways to those distinguished by Crompton (2010, p.10 & p.11-12) with the following difference. Crompton's case for working with cultural values brings together two streams of research alongside one another:

- i) studies in social psychology and sociology which examine the importance of particular values in motivating concern about bigger-than-self problems and
- ii) research on the importance of 'frames' as vehicles for working to activate and strengthen helpful values. (p.11).

For Crompton:

Values are abstract concepts, but they are made more concrete by an understanding of frames, and the way in which frames serve as vehicles to strengthen particular values in society. Frames are mental structures that allow us to understand the world. It is important to distinguish 'conceptual' framing and 'deep' framing. Conceptual framing entails careful use of working and phrasing such that an audience can be encouraged to focus on and communicate about (or obscure!) different aspects of an event, situation or policy. Deep frames are the cognitive structures held in long-term memory that contain particular values. They forge the connection between language and values, and are activated by conceptual frames. Although relatively stable, deep frames change over time. (p.58)

Crompton shows the value of integrating insights from the ideas of others such as the cognitive scientist Lakoff (2006; 29) in developing his understanding of 'framing' and 'deep frames'.

Where we differ from Crompton is in his understanding of values as 'abstract concepts'. Our understanding is that values are flowing with energy and have meaning in their embodied expressions in practice. Whilst the words and concepts we use can help to clarify and communicate the meanings of values, they cannot be identified in our understandings as 'abstract concepts'. Our meanings of values are embodied in practice and are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice. We also use McTaggart's (1992) insight that the values we express are influenced by the pressures of economic rationalism that can lead to de-valuation and de-moralisation:

We have moved beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were economic ones (de-valuation) to a situation where moral questions are denied completely (de-moralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability (as if greed had nothing to do with it). Broudy (1981) has described 'de-valuation' and de-moralization' in the following way:

De-valuation refers to diminishing or denying the relevance of all but one type of value to an issue; de-moralization denies the relevance of moral questions. The reduction of all values – intellectual, civic, health, among others – to a money value would be an example of de-

valuation; the slogan ‘business’ is business’ is an example of demoralization (Broudy, 1981: 99) (McTaggart, 1992, p. 50).

Previously Masters programmes were less constrained by models of ‘education’ driven by economic rationalism. Currently there feels to be an overwhelming concern with meeting quantitative criteria – the number of hours to ‘deliver’: content; mark scripts; and respond to students, and for the student the number of hours of lectures they must attend, the number of words they must submit and the number of students that successfully pass. We are concerned that there should be more attention paid to the quality and nature of learning and enhancing the educational influence of the student in their learning. As a consequence our practice has changed from having cohorts of students starting and finishing at the same time to trying to improve their access to field specific and knowledge and expertise and quality educational conversations and relationships. We are seeking to support their profound learning (West Burnham, 2006) as they contribute to their own learning as field experts and practitioners and create knowledge which contributes to their field of practice and a world within which humanity can flourish. This is not to say that the quality of a Masters programme as a professional qualification should be ‘reduced’, quite the contrary. By enabling practitioners to engage with researchers from different fields, the knowledge base they draw on is inevitably widened, as they test the validity of their accounts as they are created through their research. Their research becomes more rigorous as they begin to recognise and clarify their ontological and social values through the course of their research as they progress their professional, academic and personal development. Evidence for these claims has been provided in the living theory Masters writings, dissertations and doctoral theses accessible from <http://www.actionresearch.net>

This approach not only benefits students but also points to an essential role for universities responding to uniqueness of each student’s needs through the diversity of the skills and embodied knowledge held within the staff of their institutions:

- Academic and field ‘content’ is made available through access to online libraries, workshops, seminars, webinars, lectures and conferences. This can be seen in the e-learning programmes supported by Dr. Margaret Farren and Dr. Yvonne Crotty at Dublin City University (see <http://webpages.dcu.ie/~farrenm/> and <http://yvonnecrotty.com> ). It can be seen in the resources at <http://www.actionresearch.net> and at <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/>. It can also be seen in the rapid growth of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- Access to educational conversations and relationships is made available through tutorials and researching communities, see- <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/> . For example, DeLong, Campbell, Whitehead and Griffin, (2013) show the use of SKYPE for on-line tutoring within researching communities, Laidlaw (2012) shows the use of on-line tutoring for a masters programme with the Open University and Bognar (2013) shows the development of these conversations in initiating teachers’ action research.

- Testing the validity and rigour of knowledge is through submitting accounts to validation groups and to institutions of higher education for accreditation. (See Forrest 1983, for one of the first and clearest illustrations of both of these processes).

Each of these can be separately costed and offered improving the academic quality of the degree awarded, and the educational learning and field expertise of the student (see for example the processing fees for the University of the People at <http://www.uopeople.org/groups/tuition-free-universities> ).

To date we have supported Masters students registered with a university with access to academic content through pointing them to references in libraries and developing web-based resources of papers and Masters and Doctoral enquiries offered as gifts by other researchers. To make the resources available on <http://www.actionresearch.net> more accessible to researchers who are beginning, as well as those who have already experience, as researchers we have set up <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/resources.asp>

This is a virtual community of the Living Values Improving Practice Cooperatively CPD/research project. The project is for:

- Professionals who, whatever their field of practice, are committed to improving the life-chances and well-being of individuals and communities
- Researchers developing understandings, quality and influence of research as contributions to a world where humanity can flourish
- Those who want to enquire co-operatively with others who also want to express life-affirming and life-enhancing values in practice.

Through the project we are researching to create and make public our knowledge of how we are each, and together, enhancing our educational influence in our own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations we live and work in, using a living-theory approach in which we are explaining this educational influence. This is consistent with Adler-Collins' (2013) point:

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.

and as an expression of living global citizenship as outlined by Potts, Coombs and Whitehead (2013)

As we research to improve our individual daily practice we are clarifying our values as they emerge in practice while we research together to learn how to improve how we learn, work and research co-operatively and collaboratively.

We want the content of this site to captivate imaginations and researchers to feel supported and encouraged to, not only to make public their embodied knowledge and their living-educational-theories, but also to engage in co-operative enquiries that can spread the influence of the values and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity.

We are currently building content from resources and references, (including papers, books, chapters, videos, podcasts) that have been particularly interesting/useful/challenging/thought provoking etc to project researchers.

After reading this paper we are hopeful that you will visit Jack Whitehead's site <http://actionresearch.net>. started with Jack. His site gives you free access to a huge range of resources and references concerning research. You will also find doctoral theses and Masters, which people have offered over the years as gifts.

## **Findings**

The findings in the evidence-based accounts below show that a living-educational-theory approach to continuing professional development can produce both improvements in educational practice and validated explanations of educational influences in learning. These validated explanations have been published in the 2013 special themed issue of the refereed journal, Gifted Education International and have received university accreditation for Masters programmes in Continuing Professional Development.

Sage Online First has published the following papers before the print version is published in September 2013 in Gifted Education International. The copyright regulations mean that we can circulate the papers that were first submitted to Gifted Education International, before the editing. With the exception of the Whitehead and Huxtable contribution below, all the papers were submitted successfully for Masters credit for the Gifts and Talents in Education Unit of the University of Bath. The Whitehead and Huxtable paper outlines our approach to tutoring on the unit with the creation of living-educational-theories as transformational continuing professional development:

i) Marie Huxtable and Jack Whitehead – Editors Introduction.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/mhjwGEI1212intro.pdf>

ii) Jack Whitehead and Marie Huxtable

Living educational theory research as transformational continuing professional development

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmhGEIarticle141012.pdf>

iii) Amy Skuse

How have I developed my own personal views of gifts and talents in education and how does this influence what I do in the classroom?

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/module/amyskusegandtined010110.pdf>

iv) Vicky M Tucker

How my involvement with an inclusive, educational, gifted and talented programme has influenced my work with students who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/vicktucker&t.pdf>

v) Louise Cripps

How can I clarify my responsibility as a headteacher as I provide opportunities to enable all children in the school to create talents?

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/crippslgandta0809.pdf>

vi) Sally Cartwright

How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their learning?

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/scgandtnov08.pdf>

vii) Joy Mounter

How can I work within the government's perspective of 'Gifted and Talented' but still remain true to my own living values?

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/jmgt2008opt.pdf>

viii) Ros Hurford

How does using philosophy and creative thinking enable me to recognise and develop inclusive gifts and talents in my pupils?

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/roshurfordg&t.pdf>

We intend this issue of Gifted Education International to be a contribution to this global initiative on developing the talents that carry hope for the future of humanity and in offering these educational gifts to enhance our international contexts.

### **In conclusion**

The project is continuously evolving and you can participate in both the project and its evolution as you express and develop your talents and offer them as gifts to other by accessing details of the project at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/LLCCPD/Home.html>

and making your own contributions to:

<http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/>

As you create your own living-educational-theories as explanations of your educational influences in learning you may wish to contribute to the community of practitioner-researchers from all over the world who have already published their accounts in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS). For the archive and present issue together with details of submission see: <http://ejolts.net>.

We are thinking of practitioner-researchers who are sustaining their conversations about living their values as fully as they can in their stories through which they are creating their futures (Henon, 2012). These conversations are being facilitated through web-based social media, included e-mail, youtube and e-forums. They are taking place across cultures and organisational boundaries. They have much in



common with the principles that guide The World Café Conversations on Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter (Brown, 2005) with the addition that the practitioner-researchers are committed to producing and sharing their validated explanations of educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. In this way the conversations include a focus on supporting practitioner-researchers who holding themselves to account in seeking to live their values as fully as possible and to enhance the flow of values that carry hope for the future of humanity.

We are concluding with a response to the contents of the Summer 2013 Issue of Research Intelligence on ‘Challenge and Change in Teacher Education’ bearing in mind Whitehead’s (1988) and Whitty’s (2005) BERA Presidential Addresses and Menter’s (2013, p. 8) point about his Presidential address that “At the time of writing (July 2013) there is little doubt in my mind that the focus of this edition of RI – teacher education – will be a central concern of the Presidential Address that I will give to our Conference at the University of Sussex in September.”

We are hopeful that Menter, as President of the British Educational Research Association, feels a strong affinity with ‘Educational Research’ and that he rejects Whitty’s (2005, pp.172-173) distinction between education research and educational research in which he reserves the term educational research for work that is consciously geared towards improving policy and practice and education research is viewed as characterising the whole field. We believe that Menter, as President of the British Educational Research Association should focus on educational research as essentially concerned with educational knowledge creation, as well as on improving policy and practice. We urge Menter to support a view of educational research that includes insights from education researchers rather than a view of educational research as being included within education research as characterising the whole field.

We also urge Menter to consider some implications of the educational knowledge that has been created over the 25 years since Whitehead’s (1989a) BERA Presidential Address in which he outlined a living-educational-theory (Whitehead 1989b) approach to improving research-based professionalism in education. We conclude by examining some of these implications in relation to Issue 121 of Research Intelligence.

We agree with Menter (2013) that there is a government attack on educational research which could contribute to the de-professionalisation of teaching by weakening educational enquiry and limiting the idea of teaching to the transmission of subject knowledge (p.8). We also believe that the strong tendency, at least in Government-funded research, to being almost entirely limited to randomised control trials (RCTs) should be resisted because of the limitation of RCTs to produce valid explanations of educational influences in learning.

Burgess (2013) points out that moving towards a more research-informed profession will not be easy in the current educational climate. We agree. We also agree that research is a major factor in the way student teachers learn to engage critically with their own practice. However, Burgess does not distinguish between education and educational research in her view of practice as being research-informed and focused on impact. Burgess says that one opportunity to resurrect the status of teaching as a profession is the proposed Royal College of Teacher. Our response to Burgess is to

encourage her to make a distinction between education and educational research and to develop a clearer understanding of how teachers can contribute to enhancing professionalism in education by making public their own embodied knowledge and adding to the educational knowledge base at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml> and <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>

Hulme (2013) is Convenor of the BERA Teacher Education and Development SIG. She highlights the expectation in The Standards and Competences framework in Scotland and Northern Ireland for teachers to engage with educational research, participate in professional enquiry and ask critical questions of education policies. We agree with Hulme that:

Effective mediation of research knowledge is critical in strengthening research-practice links.... Access to a wider community of scholars and research knowledge is important in the development of robust and critical forms of systematic 'professional enquiry' (p.11)

However Hulme does not appear to recognise the importance of teacher-researchers in **generating** educational knowledge in her idea of 'effective mediation'. This is a serious omission in Hulme's understanding of what it means to engage with educational research.

We related closely to Winch's (2013) answer to his question, What Kind of Occupation is Teaching, with his distinctions between teacher as craftworker, executive technician and professional. However, we believe his notion of the teacher as professional is too limited. We believe that this limitation is revealed in his point that that teachers as professionals are best able to use empirical research and conceptual reflection to enhance their practice. We do not doubt that teachers can enhance their practice with insights from empirical research. We are claiming that the teacher as professional should also be seen as an educational knowledge creator, who is contributing their living educational theory as an explanation of educational influence in learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', to the knowledge-base of education.

Mattinson (2013) points out that HEIs have the opportunity to have a significant impact not only in the quality of research, but also in encouraging the ongoing development of the 'teacher as researcher'. Mattinson sees HEIs have an essential role to play in Teacher Education and that central to this is research that informs policy and practice. We have already pointed out our disagreement with Whitty's view of educational research being focused on matters of policy and practice. We favour a view of educational research as being essentially concerned with educational knowledge creation and testing. We urge Mattinson to demonstrate his engagement and understanding of the nature of the educational knowledge already created and made public by the teacher-as-researcher movement over the past 40 years and legitimated by University Teacher Education Departments.

Tato (2013) points out that in the past ten years, in part as a response to performance in international assessments such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA, education systems worldwide have created an increasingly complex curriculum across the discipline (p. 16). We agree with Tato that there needs to be an urgent, deliberate and upfront

development of research capacity in teacher education institutions and schools to create a culture for attentive and responsible investigation within systems of teaching and teacher education. Whilst we identify with this rhetoric we prefer to go further in demonstrating our understanding of where this is being done with contributions to the knowledge-base of education in Delong's doctoral research programme as a Superintendent of Schools and a tutor of Masters programmes, with the generation of a culture of enquiry (Delong, 2002; Delong, Campbell, Whitehead & Griffin, 2013).

We agree with Wilkins and Ainley (2013) that there is a need to revisit the fundamental questions about what is distinctive about the roles and expertise of school-based and university-based teacher educators, and how theoretical knowledge impacts on professional practice. Rather than asking what is distinctive about these roles and expertise we are suggesting that as educational researchers, whether in schools or universities, we should focus on what is distinctive about the worlds of school and university. We are committed to the view that one of the distinguishing qualities of being an academic in a university is that one engages in research. This research can take many forms and includes both education and educational research. We are also committed to a view of professionalism in education that includes teachers as researchers being knowledge-creators and contributing to the knowledge-base of education. Where Wilkins and Ainley highlight the importance of how theoretical knowledge impacts on professional practice they show no understanding that the generation of the living-educational-theories of teachers as explanations of their educational influence in learning can also relate directly to enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'.

McNamara and Murray (2013) state that:

'Like many teacher educators, we would argue that pre-service provision should be research-informed, taught through effective partnerships between schools and universities and designed to inculcate critical thinking skills and an inquiry stance.' (p.22)

Whilst we agree with this point we suggest that pre-service provision should not only be research-informed but also focus on student teachers as educational knowledge creators, in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Student teachers are capable of generating their own living-educational-theories (Laidlaw, 1993) and should be encouraged to do so during their pre-service programmes.

Myhill (2013) points out that:

Research-led teacher education, therefore, is less about referring to research in lectures or seminars, and more about how research is used to empower students to engage critically with their own practice and the local and national contexts within which they are becoming teachers. (p.25)

In this presentation on living-educational-theories as transformational continuing professional development, we have presented the idea of educational research as a form of professional educational practice rather than research informed or research-led teacher education.

We have drawn your attention above to the evidence in the September 2013 issue of Gifted Education International to show how educational research that explores the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ can generate living-educational-theories that are an integral part of empowering students and teachers to engage critically with their own practice and the local and national contexts that influence their practice.

Edwards (2013) suggests that one challenge for Education is that of establishing ‘credibility’ built upon a more rigorous social scientific research identity (p. 27).

Our challenge to this idea is based on Whitehead’s (1999) doctoral research programme in which he distinguished an educational research identity, grounded in educational enquiry, from a social scientific research identity grounded in the methodologies, conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the social sciences. We are suggesting that the challenge of ‘credibility’ is in establishing, as academically legitimate, the values-laden explanatory principles and living standards of judgement, used by practitioner-researchers in gaining academic legitimacy for their living-educational-theories. You can access some 40 living theory doctorates at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> which have been accredited as original contributions to knowledge with distinct educational research methodologies and living standards of judgment.

Torrance (2013) engages with Goldacre’s (2013) paper on ‘Building Evidence into Education’ in which he argues that more experimental research should be undertaken in education, specifically randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Torrance points out that large parts of Goldacre’s paper draws examples from Medicine and suggests that it might have been more useful to look at how the issues raised by Goldacre have been addressed in educational research over the years.

Torrance points out that research cannot define what ‘works best’ and to pretend otherwise is to assert the primacy of one particular research method over the provision of a wide range of different sorts of evidence to inform debate (p.29).

We do agree about the need for a wide range of different sorts of evidence to inform debate and that it would be foolish to assert the primacy of one particular research method over this provision. As a contribution to this provision we have presented an approach to the generation of living-educational-theories as transformational continuing professional development. This approach has taken the form of an evidence-based narrative which offers an educational research approach to the generation of living-educational-theories that can explain 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, work and research.

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