CARN Virtual Conference October 25th 2020
'Raised Voices'

Symposium: *Educational action research conversations that contribute to the flourishing of humanity.*

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Abstract

In this symposium we explore the use of conversation as a Living Educational Theory [1]research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research. These values form the explanatory principles we use in explanations of our educational influences – in our own learning, in the learning of others and, in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. Our presentations will include: a brief outline of the unit of appraisal (our individual and collective explanations of our educational influences in learning); the unique constellation of relationally dynamic values used as explanatory principles; insights from four forms of rationality (propositional, dialectical, participatory and living logics). We will engage with Gadamer's insights about conversation and his logic of question and answer, and Stern's ideas on virtuous educational research. In the symposium we will seek, in conversation, to offer and test evidence to support our claim that, as we engage in Living Educational Theory research, we are extending and deepening educational conversations – conversations that are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

Introduction

We have known each other for over 20 years, initially as students (Pete and Marie) and tutor and supervisor (Jack) and for over 12 years as friends and colleagues. We have engaged in educational conversations during this time with a focus on our educational influences in our learning as we seek to live as worth while lives as possible. Since 2008 we have supported each other in contributing to the Educational Journal of Living Theories as members of the editorial board and as contributors. We have also shared presentations in the American Educational Research Association; the British Educational Research Association; the Collaborative Action Research Network; the Association of Teacher Education in Europe; the Action Learning, Action Research Association; the Action Research Network of the Americas. We make this point to emphasise that we have sustained our relationships, our conversations and contributions to educational knowledge, over many years. We take for granted our respect for the educational values and insights shared below through the positional contribution from Pete Mellett, Marie Huxtable's draft thoughts on three issues and Jack Whitehead's initial responses to four questions related to the Abstract. The text below has been shared on the 21st October 2020 for our educational conversation on the 22nd October 2020.

A) A positional contribution from Pete Mellett

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[1] 'Living Educational Theory' – Living Theory – (with upper case) research refers to a lexical definition of meaning which distinguishes Living Theory research; whereas living-educational-theory' – living-theory – (with lower case) refers to the unique embodied and ostensive expressions of meaning in explanations of an individual's educational influence in learning.

1. Good-quality conversations
   a. Dialogue and dialectic
   b. Validity
   c. The 'Respectful Editor'

2. Research methods and their resulting accounts
   a. The new scholarship and a new epistemology
   b. Action Research and Living Educational Theory
   c. Living Educational Theory and conversation

B) Marie's draft thoughts on three issues

My first issue is whether a conversation to clarify our meaning of 'educational influence in learning' would help us understand and communicate what a '**conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research**' might be.

My second issue is to do with the nature of values that are at the heart of all living-educational-theories

My third issue is the meaning of 'conversation' in, 'conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research'. What is the nature of 'conversation' to clarify the meanings of the values as they emerge in the course of our research, and is that the same as the nature of 'conversation' to communicate the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research? And is that the same as a 'conversation' used as a method for making public and validating our account of what has emerged from our researching together?

C) Jack's initial contribution to answering four questions

1) Have I explored the use of conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research. These values form the explanatory principles we use in explanations of our educational influences – in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.

2) Have I included: a brief outline of the unit of appraisal (our individual and collective explanations of our educational influences in learning); the unique constellation of relationally dynamic values used as explanatory principles; insights drawing on various forms of logical discourse.

3) Have I engaged with Gadamer's insights about conversation and his logic of question and answer, and Stern's ideas about virtuous educational research.

4) Have I offered and tested evidence to support our claim that, as we engage in Living Educational Theory research, we are extending and deepening educational conversations – conversations that are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

A) Positioning contribution from Peter Mellett

(Based on material from Mellett (2020) Evolving Educational Influences in Learning: collaborative communities of practice, relationally-dynamic constellations of values and praxis. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, vol. 13, pp. 71-97 at https://ejolts.net/files/357.pdf)

1. Good-quality conversations

I am hoping that the title of this conference – *Raised Voices* – refers to the agency of 'good-quality conversations' to generate new knowledge and understanding. My understanding of this term is based on insights that I have gathered over a number of years from a number of different sources. These insights fit together, as follows, to form what might be termed the 'rules of engagement' that set up the behavioural parameters for engendering good-quality educational conversations.

a. Dialogue and dialectic

In her review of Hans-Georg Gadamer's contribution to modern hermeneutics, Georgia Warnke (1987) discerns a move from 'objectivity' to 'intentions' as the agent for understanding.

> "… its attempt [*Truth and Method*] to resuscitate a dialogic conception of knowledge. … reflects … a change from a focus on the possible truth of a text to a focus on method; from the consideration of the validity of a text to a preoccupation with procedures for understanding an author's intentions." (p. 4)

While Gadamer frequently refers to "texts" there is a clear emphasis on dialogue and dialectics, as discussed by P. Christopher Smith in his introduction to eight essays on Plato by Gadamer (1980).

> " In live discussion ... we do not proceed *more geometrico*; instead, we move back and forth, often illogically, from one aspect of the thing to another within a given context or situation which defines the limits of what we say to each other. And the success of such a live discussion is not at all to be measured by its logical rigor but by its effectiveness in bringing the essence of the subject matter to light to the extent that the limited conditions of any discussion permit." (pp. ix–x)

> "As opposed to methodical deduction, in discussion the question as such prevails over the answer. Good discussions are provocations to think further ... language is not a tool we use but something which precedes us and whose play we submit to." (p. x)

The emphasis on questions within discussion was earlier put forward by R. G. Collingwood (1934, 1991), who called this relationship "the logic of question and answer". He wrote:

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

Forty years later, Gadamer (1975, 1989) reviewed Collingwood's ideas and took essentially the same point of view:

"... the meaning of a sentence is relative to the question to which it is a reply, *i.e.* it necessarily goes beyond what is said in it." (p.333)

Gadamer also discusses the 'rules of engagement' for conducting dialogue in a dialectical manner that leads to the strengthening of insights into a matter of joint interest. It is worth quoting at length:

"…To conduct a dialogue requires first of all that the partners do not talk at cross purposes. Hence it necessarily has the structure of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us. ... To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all the possibilities fluid. A person skilled in the 'art' of questioning is a person who can prevent questions being suppressed by the dominant opinion. A person who possess this art will himself search for everything in favour of an opinion. Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength. It is not the art of arguing (which can make a strong case out of a weak one) but in the art of thinking (which can strengthen objections by referring to the subject matter).

"The unique and continuing relevance of the Platonic dialogues is due to this art of strengthening, for in this process what is said is continually transformed into the uttermost possibilities of its rightness and truth, and overcomes all opposition that tries to limit its validity. Here again it is not simply a matter of leaving the subject undecided. Someone who wants to know something cannot just leave it a matter of mere opinion, which is to say that he cannot hold himself aloof from the opinions that are in question. The speaker is put to the question until the truth of what is under discussion finally emerges. The maieutic[2] productivity of the Socratic dialogue, the art of using words as a midwife, is certainly directed towards the people who are the partners is the dialogue, but it is concerned merely with the opinions they express, the immanent logic of the subject matter that is unfolded in the dialogue. What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and so far transcends the interlocutors' subjective opinions that even the persons leading the conversation knows that he does not know.

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[2] Of or denoting the Socratic mode of enquiry which aims to bring a person's latent ideas into clear consciousness – from Greek ... *maieuesthai* 'act as a midwife'. Concise OED (1911, 2004) Oxford, OUP.

"As the art of conducting a conversation, dialectic is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect ... i.e. it is the art of forming concepts through working out the common meaning. What characterises a dialogue, in contrast with the rigid form of statements that demand to be set down in writing, is precisely this: that in dialogue, spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point – performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. Hence, it is more than a metaphor; it is a memory of what originally was the case, to describe the task of hermeneutics as entering into dialogue with the text. That this interpretation is performed by spoken language does not mean that it is transposed into a foreign medium; rather, being transformed into spoken language represents the restoration of the original communication of meaning. When it is interpreted, written tradition is brought back out of the alienation in which it finds itself and into the living presentation of conversation, which is always fundamentally realised in question and answer."
(pp. 367–8)

b. Validity

Issues of validity are central to the legitimation of claims to educational knowledge. Habermas' (1976) commentary on validity within "speech acts" (which I equate with conversations) encompasses issues of comprehensibility, truth, rightness and authenticity in reaching an understanding with another. The speaker must:

- choose a comprehensible expression

- have the intention of communicating a true proposition

- choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background

- want to express his or her intentions truthfully so that the hearer can believe and trust the speaker; (pp. 2–3).

I understand these four issues as having a close association with the dialectical approach to creating new knowledge described by Gadamer (*ibid.*) and the question-and- answer structure within conversation of Collingwood (*ibid.*).

c. The 'Respectful Editor'

I use this term to describe the manner in which two people engage in the sort of ideal dialectical exchange described above. Each of the participants comes to the conversation with their own unique autobiography – which is the ontological story each tells themselves about themselves – and writes the latest section of their respective personal stories through their *educational* encounter with each other. Each new insight generated within the conversation has to be assessed and edited into the existing and evolving stories, as are the educational outcomes sought from any educational enquiry. How do they incorporate each other's evolving story into their own as the conversation proceeds? How does each act as a 'respectful editor' within this dynamic relationship and help the *other* to write his or her latest story?

I identified the notion of the 'respectful editor' in 2000, when writing for the BERA Review under the title *Educational Action Research within Teaching as a Research-based Profession* (Mellett, 2000)*.* Although the focus of that text was on educational research in the formal sense, I now maintain that there are aspects of all human interaction that take the form of educational research, whether research projects as

such, or as the question-and-answer relationships between humans engaged in the exchange of written texts or engaged in face-to-face conversation. Thus, although the *BERA Review* article referred to educational research, the relevant sections may be read as having significance for the interaction between people, as follows.

In the context of formal educational research, Robert Donmoyer (1996) speaks of 'gate keeping' as a major role of an editor of an educational journal. He describes the two approaches to gate keeping that I would now refer to as elucidating the 'rules of engagement' implicit in the style of much human encounter. Donmeyer begins by identifying two postures commonly adopted by gatekeepers: the 'Traditional Response' (we talk sense; 'they' talk rubbish) and the 'Balkanization Response' (leave 'them' to get on with their business while we get on with ours). In these cases, there is no dialogue and no understanding, particularly between those who wish to maintain a position of power within a relationship.

Donmoyer then describes a third way, quoting from the conclusions that Richard Bernstein (1993) suggests should be drawn from the debates about incommensurability:

> " ... to listen carefully, to use ... linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in 'alien' traditions ... [without] either facilely assimilating what others are saying to our own categories and language ... or dismissing ... [it] as incoherent nonsense." (p. 22)

My attention then turned to Pam Lomax (1999) who introduced the notion of 'respect':

> "Respect for evidence is the corner stone of evidence-based professionalism, but evidence does not necessarily imply an absolutist position. ... In the past, there has been a tendency to accept scientific evidence which appeals to rational criteria, rather than other evidence that might appeal to moral, spiritual, political, aesthetic, emotional or affective criteria, or to the practical criteria that practitioners might employ. ... the most challenging aspect of a new evidence-based professionalism based on a value of respect for the integrity of our acts. ... A new discipline of educational enquiry." (p.13)

Pam Lomax's contention is that respect is the cornerstone of evidence-based professionalism – for me, it is also the cornerstone of a good-quality conversation, which, in its ideal state of dialectical question-and-answer, constitutes an educational enquiry.

2. Research methods and their resulting accounts

Having discussed my understanding of the role of conversation in generating new knowledge and understanding, the question now arises as to the form of the educational research methodology within which conversation might profitably operate.

a. The new scholarship and a new epistemology

Donald Schön (1995) spoke of moving away from existing forms of the current objectivising praxis and implied that a paradigm shift from positivist logics would be required:

> "... if the new scholarship is to mean anything, it must imply a kind of action research with norms of its own, which will conflict with the norms of technical rationality ..." (p. 27)

Schön suggested that practice should be seen as a setting, not only for the application of knowledge, but for its generation, acknowledging and utilising the kinds of knowing that are already embedded in competent practice.

> "Perhaps there is an epistemology of practice that takes fuller account of the competence practitioners sometimes display in situations of uncertainty, complexity, uniqueness and conflict." (p. 29) "... what Polanyi calls "tacit knowing" and what I would like to describe as 'knowing-in-action'. I submit that such knowing-in-action makes up the great bulk of what we know how to do in everyday and in professional life." (p. 30)

Thus, Schön's "knowing-in-action" involves our capability of reflecting on what we know as revealed by what we do – and our ability to reflect-in-action enables us to generate new knowing. (p. 30). Furthermore, this "practice knowledge" may be made explicit and put into a form that allows it to be generalised, in such a way that both the problem and the action strategies can be carried over to new situations perceived as being similar to the first.

Schön was writing in response to Ernest Boyer (1990, 2016), who had asked in his *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* for:

> " ... a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching" ... Theory surely leads to practice. But practice also leads to theory. And teaching, at its best, shapes both research and practice. Viewed from this perspective, a more comprehensive, a more dynamic understanding of scholarship can be considered. (pp. 15–16).

I read Boyer as suggesting that elements of theory and of practice inform each other as an educational enquiry proceeds; they exist in a dynamic equilibrium of question and answer with each other, where:

> "... the work of the scholar ... means stepping back from one's own investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice (p. xxii) [and where] ... there is a readiness ... to rethink what it means to be a scholar (p. 16).*" (p. 23).

I regard Boyer's "looking or connections" as having its agency within 'good quality conversations' in which each participant acts as 'respectful editors' as they engage in a dynamic equilibrium of question and answer

In the 30 years since Boyer called for a new form of scholarship, there have been many initiatives to establish practitioner-led qualitative methodologies as legitimate forms of educational research. I shall now examine the claim of Living Educational Theory research to be a well-founded and credible research methodology within the field of educational research, as a new form of scholarship encompassing a new epistemology.

b. Action Research and Living Educational Theory

Practitioners research questions that are important to them: the questions are generally of the form "How can I improve the quality of my practice?" They employ various research methodologies such as Action Research, Narrative Enquiry and Auto-ethnography. Action Research methodology is rooted in the researcher's practice and may be described as 'research with' rather than 'research on', thus making the distinction respectively between 'educational research' and 'education research'. Such educational research enquiries make claims to have an educational influence. Living Educational Theory offers a distinct form of theorising, whereby these claims are validated through the researcher producing an "…explanation of their educational

influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations" (Whitehead 1985, 1989).

A summary under the title *What is Living Educational Theory (Living Theory) research and what are living-educational-theories (living-theories)?* is available at and includes the following explanation:

> "An individual's living-educational-theories are living, that is they are evolving and they are lived as they are embodied and expressed by the researcher through their practice. Researchers' living-educational-theory accounts provide explanations and standards of judgment of 'improving practice' in terms of their relational and ontological values that are clarified as they emerge and evolve through their research. A 'living-educational-theory' is the particular/unique living-educational-theory generated by individuals to explain their educational influences in learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' ... Improvement in practice is understood as practice that contributes to a world in which humanity can flourish and is expressed in the values-based living standards of judgment of the Living Theory researcher."

Thus, action research may be seen as one of a range of methodologies, through which a researcher's living-educational-theory enquiry can make a valid claim to have educational influence. Living Educational Theory puts at its core the *educational influence* of a researcher's enquiry. The aim of a living-educational-theory account is for the writer to make a valid claim that they understand their own educational development[3], as explained by Jack Whitehead (1989) in his seminal paper on Living Educational Theory research. The opening summary states:

> "I'm assuming that all readers of this Journal will at some time have asked themselves questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?', and will have endeavoured to improve some aspect of their practice. I believe that a systematic reflection on such a process provides insights into the nature of the descriptions and explanations which we would accept as valid accounts of our educational development. I claim that a living educational theory will be produced from such accounts." (p. 41)

The new epistemology implicit within Living Educational Theory research includes the unit of appraisal of an explanation produced by an individual educator for his or her educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the social formations in which they live and work. The standards of judgment applied to those units of appraisal are values-based and lie at the core of the individual living-educational-theory researcher's claim to knowledge. An individual's living-educational-theory is described by explanatory principles that are informed by their values as ethical principles and standards of judgment.

Thus, our educational development is moved forward by our values, which are revealed by ostensive definitions that "... show and to point to the meanings of the standards which are embodied in our practice and whose meanings can be clarified in the course of their emergence in practice" (Whitehead 1989, *ibid.*) – as distinct from 'lexical' definitions of standards described by words defined in terms of other words.

c. Living Educational Theory and conversation

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[3] See also Whitehead, J. (1985) which refers to an analysis of an individual's educational development as the basis for personally-orientated action research.

Living Educational Theory research does not simply offer me – as a living-educational-theory researcher making claims about my educational influences – a new form of scholarship informed by a new epistemology. It offers me the opportunity to develop my praxis, constituted as a unique integration of my *knowing* with my *doing* with my *being*. In this context, I equate *knowing* with theory (including epistemology), *doing* with my practice, and *being* with my values in action. This relationship is shown the diagram below.

PRAXIS	=	KNOWING	+	DOING	+	BEING
living theory		*episteme*		practice		values
▽ The New Scholarship (Boyer)		▽ The New Epistemology (Schön)				

One of the distinctive aspects of Living Educational Theory research is its focus on collaboration and community, as researchers describe and explain their educational influences. Each researcher carries out their own living-educational-theory enquiry within the context of the broader Living Educational Theory research collaborative community, which provides the basic epistemology (as practice and principles) for their contributions to this new form of scholarship. I equate my own living-educational-research enquiries with collaboration mediated through conversation within community. Ultimately, my understanding of the generation, meaning and use of the word 'We' within a collaborative living-educational-research enquiry is engendered through good-quality conversations that are respectful, dialogical and which use the art of employing words (mediated variously through text, audio and video recordings) as the midwife to the emergence of new knowledge and understanding. **17th October 2020**

B) Marie's draft thoughts

Given the title of the symposium, 'Educational action research conversations that contribute to the flourishing of humanity', and it is a contribution to the CARN conference I presume those who join us do so with a desire to develop their thinking and practice as an educational-practitioner researcher, have knowledge of Action Research as a form of practitioner research and they want to do good in the world.

A practitioner researcher engages in Action Research to improve practice. A practitioner researcher engages in Living Educational Theory research to research their educational practice not only to understand, improve and explain it but also to contribute to a global educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all. In the course of Living Educational Theory research the researcher clarifies their embodied ontological and social values, which form not only their explanatory principles in their explanations of their educational influence in learning but also the standards by which they evaluate improvement in learning, and generates a valid account of their explanation of their educational influence in learning which improves the situation within which their practice is located.

1) **the use of conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research. These values form the explanatory principles we use in explanations of our educational influences – in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.**

I would add that the values that form the explanatory principles in our explanations of our educational influence in learning also contribute to the standards by which we hold ourselves to account as we judge what results from our efforts to improve our practice. But I am not sure whether that is what you would agree with.

I am wondering whether, because of the emphasis on 'improving practice' and 'enhancing our educational influences in our own learning', values have been seen in Living Educational Theory research as standards by which to judge *our self* and *what we do* (practice – and even sometimes just actions) rather than *the results of what we do* (learning).

I have understood Living Educational Theory research is a form of educational practitioner self-study research distinguished by the practitioner researcher's valid explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations within which their practice is situated.

Research is both process and product. Living Educational Theory research is the process that a researcher engages in to understand and improve their practice and produce a valid explanation of the educational influence they have been working to have in the learning of others and/or the social formations within which their practice is situated, and the educational influence they have in their own learning as the research to improve the influence of their practice. The ontological and social values that form the explanatory principles of such explanations are clarified as they emerge through the research. These values also contribute to the evaluative standards by which the practitioner hold them self to account in claims to have improved the situation.

I understand Living Educational Theory research to be concerned with a continual process of the researcher researching into their educational practice to understand, improve and explain it in order to contribute to the growth of a global knowledge base we might all benefit from.

Reading both Jack and Pete's positioning contributions I am wondering whether where I feel a tension is where they focus on the nature of 'educational research', which Pete says, "… are aspects of all human interaction that take the form of educational research", where:

> "Each of the participants comes to the conversation with their own unique autobiography – which is the ontological story each tells themselves about themselves – and writes the latest section of their respective personal stories through their *educational* encounter with each other. Each new insight generated within the conversation has to be assessed and edited into the existing and evolving stories, as are the educational outcomes sought from any educational enquiry.

I understood Living Educational Theory research, as a form of educational practitioner self-study research the purpose of which is to generate knowledge that contributes to a new form of scholarship and epistemology as Pete also describes, the veracity of which can be tested through a process of public validation he also describes. This is different to the form of knowledge that comprises the 'ontological story each tells themselves about themselves'. Such stories may, or may not help to communicate the meanings of the explanations of an educational-practitioner's educational influence in learning but confusing or conflating the two I don't think helps either.

I wonder whether a conversation to clarify our meaning of 'educational influence in learning' would help us understand and communicate what a '**conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research**' might be**.**

Understanding the meaning of 'explanations of educational influence in learning' is core to developing knowledge, understanding and practice of Living Educational Theory research as a form of educational practitioner self-study research. As it is sometimes easier to change a picture than starting with a blank page I offer the following with the hope of stimulating an educational and productive conversation in the form Pete and Jack allude to by quoting Gadamer. I am also mindful of what Quinn said about the need to 'decentre' to engage in what he calls an argument but I think Gadamer calls conversation or dialogue:

> "Decentring is a vital idea. It is the achievement whereby I learn what it is that you need to hear or experience in order to share what is in my mind, whether it be a question, an idea or a supportive anecdote. (Quinn, 1997, p.87)"

With the benefit of hindsight I can now see a lot wrong in my thesis so I offer this not 'defensively' but to provide a context to explore with you what might emerge through conversation between us in a space (or as I term it, 'a living-boundary') between us. I wrote:

> As an educational psychologist I spent years wondering how to evaluate my work. I was familiar with the approaches built on notions of 'cause and effect', which have contributed to the development of such concepts as 'impact indicators', and 'value added'. Yet I was, and am, aware that life is much more complicated and subtle than that, and I do not believe I can ascribe to myself the power that such approaches require. I find Whitehead's (1989a) notion of 'educational influence' far more nuanced and this has enabled me to look at my work in a different way. Like Whitehead, for me to feel I have had an educational influence in the learning of another I need evidence that what I have offered has been transmuted by them to contribute to their progress to giving expression to their best intent, which is informed by their values: I do not believe I have had an educational influence if what I offer is unthinkingly replicated.

> For me to feel I have had an educational influence in the learning of a social formation I need to see some evidence that I have contributed to developing a context where humanity can flourish. By educational influence I also mean the contribution I make to learning in the direction of my values with the 'best intent' of the other/s in sharp focus. I am using the notion of intent quite specifically and giving it my own meaning. By 'best intent' I mean the values-based hope that is the fuel of living a loving, satisfying, productive, worthwhile life, which makes this a better world for us all. That is not the same as what is in a person's 'best interest', which is to do with what might be best for the individual/s and may or may not include

consideration for anyone else. It can be challenging to support the other to realise their best intent when it is not in their best interest. Lifton (1988) gives an account of Korczak, a Polish-Jewish children's author and paediatrician who, during the second world war, chose to accompany the children in his care to Treblinka against the advice of his friends. His actions were an expression of his best intent but as that led to certain death they were by no means in his best interest.

My practice is concerned with the development of opportunities for educational experiences. Educational experiences are those that enhance the possibilities of the learner coming into their own presence; to know the person they are and want to be and contribute to them developing their educational influence in learning and life. (p.37-38)

That brings me to the second issue, which is to do with the nature of values that are at the heart of all living-educational-theories – they have been variously described as 'life-affirming' or 'energy flowing values which carry hope for the flourishing of humanity', and emotive words like 'love' are frequently used in accounts of living-educational-theories as though they are the only motivators at work, or the only acceptable ones – for instance when they are juxtaposed with the phrase, 'values that give our lives meaning and purpose', with the implication that other values are unacceptable. Yet those that motivate us to engage in a practice are not necessarily those a practitioner-researcher uses to explain their educational influence in learning or by which the learning is judged. I am finding the work of Crompton et al is leading me to consider the values that give meaning and purpose to a person's life, those that motivate them to engage in a practice, those that they can explain their educational influence in learning should not be conflated. I think the conflation can result in self knowledge being mistakenly offered as educational practitioner knowledge and any challenge to the validity of the educational-practitioner knowledge created being taken as a challenge to the 'validity' of the person them self.

The third issue is the meaning of 'conversation' in, 'conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research'. What is the nature of 'conversation' to clarify the meanings of the values as they emerge in the course of our research, and is that the same as the nature of 'conversation' to communicate the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research? And is that the same as a 'conversation' used as a method for making public and validating our account of what has emerged from our researching together?
I need help to understand whether what both Jack and Pete have said answers these questions.

I will skip the rest and just leave a word about

… offering and testing evidence to support our claim that, as we engage in Living Educational Theory research, we are extending and deepening educational conversations – conversations that are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

I devoted much my thesis trying to communicate the meaning of 'emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian…' as illustrated by these few summary extracts:

- Inclusive –

  Through the cooperative engagement with others, in the process of creating their living-theories, each researcher develops and offers, talents, expertise and knowledge that are recognised and valued. The unique 'i' is valued as distinct from 'you' but not discrete within 'we' (p.76)

  … to signify the importance I attach to each person valuing their own gifts and that of others, as the unique contributions each person develops and offers to enhance their own well-being and the common good (p.112)

  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. (p.121)

- Emancipating –

  The researcher as learner is empowered to accept and express their responsibility for the educational influence they have in their own learning and life, that of others and the social formations they are part of (p.76)

  …to point to the importance of each person accepting and expressing their responsibility to enhance their own learning and life and that of others. While it is only individuals who can emancipate themselves, I recognise there are contexts that enable or disable, to a greater or lesser extent, the discharge of that personal responsibility for enhancing learning and wellbeing (p.112)

  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. (p.121)

- Egalitarian –

  Power to create, contribute and benefit from talents and knowledge is by each and all and expressed within an i~we, i~you relationship. (p.76)

  … to make clear the value I attach to i~we where the individual is neither subservient nor dominant to another, but each exerts their power with others and self, to co-create knowledge collaboratively to enhance the well-being and well-becoming of each and all (p.112)

  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. (p.121)

  In an i~we relationship, each respects their own and the other's 'i' and an implicitly negotiated sense of 'we'. For me this is a relationship where the unique contribution of 'i' is held within 'we' and is neither subordinated nor dominant. It is a relationship that holds the potential for collaboration as a step beyond co-operation. The ~ is a trustworthy, inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian space for knowledge-creating research. Individuals form the living-boundary with a mutual commitment to enabling respectful connectedness and a loving recognition of self

and other, and to express their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and 'we'. (p.196)

I believe there is evidence in the wiki that Pete set up and in the open review space that as practitioner-researchers engage in Living Educational Theory research, they are extending and deepening educational conversations.

I don't see, yet, any evidence to support a claim that such conversations are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

C) An initial contribution by Jack Whitehead to the educational conversation with Peter Mellett and Marie Huxtable – 16th October 2020.

Introduction

In the successful proposal for this symposium we made the following claims. We said that we would explore the use of conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research. These values form the explanatory principles we use in explanations of our educational influences – in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. Our presentations will include: a brief outline of the unit of appraisal (our individual and collective explanations of our educational influences in learning); the unique constellation of relationally dynamic values used as explanatory principles; insights drawing on various forms of logical discourse. We will engage with Gadamer's insights about conversation and his logic of question and answer, and Stern's ideas about virtuous educational research. In the symposium we will, in conversation, offer and test evidence to support our claim that, as we engage in Living Educational Theory research, we are extending and deepening educational conversations – conversations that are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

In my contribution to this Symposium I will seek to answer the following questions that are related to the above claims:

1) **Have I explored the use of conversation as a Living Educational Theory research method for clarifying and communicating the meanings of our values as they emerge in the course of our research. These values form the explanatory principles we use in explanations of our educational influences – in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.**

Marie asked if we would share the meanings we were giving to Living Educational Theory research.

Here is a meaning of Living Educational Theory research I drafted out on the 15/10/20.

> My meaning of Living Educational Theory research is closely related to my meaning of a living-educational-theory as an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations. These explanations are usually generated as individual's explore the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my educational practice?'
>
> Living Educational Theory research refers to the contributions to educational knowledge and individual makes as they generate their living-educational-theory. These contributions usually include a constellation of values that they individual uses as explanatory principles in their explanations of educational influence. They usually include the unique methodological approach that is produced in the course of generating a living-educational-theory. The contributions usually include a constellation of insights from other theories, that the individual uses in the generation of their living-educational-theory.

On 15 Oct 2020, at 10:02, Marie Huxtable <marie_huxtable@yahoo.co.uk> wrote:

> Hi Jack - I see confusion about the nature of Living Educational Theory research - or maybe it is me who is confused and everyone else who is clear but I don't want to accept their interpretation. The confusion I see is to do with the meaning of the 'I' in the research. I see Living Educational Theory research as a form of educational-practitioner self-study and the 'I' is the expression of the individual taking responsibility for their practice by researching into it to understand, improve and explain it. The 'I' is not that which is the concern of psychological,religious or even philosophical self-study, which is what some seem to see it as.
>
> I wonder whether whether if a living-educational-theory was described as a practitioner's explanation of their educational influence in the learning of a social formation and/or the learning of others (plural) it might help - just a thought.

I'm OK with an understanding of a living-educational-theory as a practitioner's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of a social formation and/or in the learning of others.

I agree with Marie's understanding of Living Educational Theory research as form of educational-practitioner self-study in which the 'I' is the expression of the individual taking responsibility for their practice by researching into it to understand, improve and explain it. I differ where Marie says that 'I' is not that which is the concern of psychological, religious, or evening philosophical self-study. I see my 'I' as including these concerns and other concerns as I deepen and extend my cognitive range and concerns in my educational practices.

2) **Have I included: a brief outline of the unit of appraisal (our individual and collective explanations of our educational influences in learning);**

the unique constellation of relationally dynamic values used as explanatory principles; insights drawing on various forms of logical discourse.

In my contribution to the conversation about the unit of appraisl I refer to my 1993 text:

Whitehead, J. (1993) The Growth of Educational Knowledge. Creating Your Own Living Educational Theories. Originally published by Hyde publications in 1993. https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jwgek93.htm

In this text I present the unit of appraisal as my explanation of my educational influences in my own learning and in the learning of others.

In my contribution to the conversation about relationally dynamic values, my unique constellation of relationally dynamic values I use as explanatory principles focus on academic freedom and creativity. **I have yet to produce a collective explanation of our educational influences in learning.**

In my contribution to the conversation on insights drawing on various forms of logical discourse, I refer to my writings that focus on distinctions between propositional, dialectical and living logics and explain how I draw insights from propositional and dialectical theories in the generation of my living-educational-theory with its living logic.

Whitehead, J. (2013) A living logic for educational research. A presentation at the 2013 Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Sussex, 5th September. https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera13/jwbera13phil010913.pdf

Whitehead, J. (2011) Developing a relationally dynamic epistemology for educational knowledge - Presentation at the British Educational Research Association Conference, 7th September 2011. https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwbera11dr040911opt.pdf

3) **Have I engaged with Gadamer's insights about conversation and his logic of question and answer, and Stern's ideas about virtuous educational research.**

I have engaged with Gadamer's insights about conversation in the sense that I agree with the following and believe that both Marie and Pete agree with Gadamer's description of a conversation:

> To conduct a dialogue requires first of all that the partners do not talk at cross purposes. Hence it necessarily has the structure of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us. ... To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence

it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all the possibilities fluid. A person skilled in the 'art' of questioning is a person who can prevent questions being suppressed by the dominant opinion. A person who possesses this art will himself search for everything in favour of an opinion. Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength. It is not the art of arguing (which can make a strong case out of a weak one) but in the art of thinking (which can strengthen objections by referring to the subject matter).

The unique and continuing relevance of the Platonic dialogues is due to this art of strengthening, for in this process what is said is continually transformed into the uttermost possibilities of its rightness and truth, and overcomes all opposition that tries to limit its validity. Here again it is not simply a matter of leaving the subject undecided. Someone who wants to know something cannot just leave it a matter of mere opinion, which is to say that he cannot hold himself aloof from the opinions that are in question. The speaker is put to the question until the truth of what is under discussion finally emerges. The maieutic productivity of the Socratic dialogue, the art of using words as a midwife, is certainly directed towards the people who are the partners is the dialogue, but it is concerned merely with the opinions they express, the immanent logic of the subject matter that is unfolded in the dialogue. What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and so far transcends the interlocutors' subjective opinions that even the persons leading the conversation knows that he does not know.

As the art of conducting a conversation, dialectic is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect – i.e. it is the art of forming concepts through working out the common meaning. What characterises a dialogue, in contrast with the rigid form of statements that demand to be set down in writing, is precisely this: that in dialogue, spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point – performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. Hence, it is more than a metaphor; it is a memory of what originally was the case, to describe the task of hermeneutics as entering into dialogue with the text. That this interpretation is performed by spoken language does not mean that it is transposed into a foreign medium; rather, being transformed into spoken language represents the restoration of the original communication of meaning. When it is interpreted, written tradition is brought back out of the alienation in which it finds itself and into the living presentation of conversation, which is always fundamentally realised in question and answer. (Gadamer, 1975, 1989 pp. 367-8)

I think that the three of us agree with Gadamer that:

The logic of the human sciences is, then, as appears from what we have said a logic of the question. Despite Plato we are not very ready for such a logic." (pp. 330-333)

Gadamer, H. G. (1975) Truth and Method, London; Sheed and Ward.

Gadamer does not develop a logic of question and answer. He says that Collingwood made the progress. However, Collingwood died before developing a logic of question and answer. In the paper referenced above:

Whitehead, J. (2013) A living logic for educational research. A presentation at the 2013 Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Sussex, 5th September.
https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera13/jwbera13phil010913.pdf

I have set out a living logic for educational research that I believe contributes to a logic of question and answer.

How I have engaged with Stern's ideas on Virtuous Educational Research?

Stern, J. (2016) Virtuous Educational Research: Conversations on Ethical Practice. Oxford; Peter Lang.

Stern believes that virtues are more central to personhood than knowledge, and are more embodied than what might be stated as our values or belief (p.3). I do not make this distinction preferring to focus on values. Stern believes that remembering virtue also means reaching through the all-too-often procedural 'tick-box' approach to research ethics and the practice of educational research to find empathy, artistry, courage, humility and the rest. (p.4). I believe that educational values include empathy, artistry, courage, humility and other values. I agree with Stern's working definition of research (p.5) as
the one given by the UK's largest research funding body: ' research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared' (HEFCE 2011, p. 48)

In relation to his research on conversation Stern makes the point

The choice of conversationalists might be described as an example of opportunity sampling, as all are known to me in one way or another. However, an attempt was made to have a variety of researchers: some very experienced, some relatively new to research: some philosophers, some psychologies, some working on policy studies, social work, theology or religious education, counselling, teacher education, and more: and researchers working in eight countries. Twelve of the eighteen are female…(p. 12)

When arranging the conversations, each conversationalist was sent by Stern a guide to the project. The guide included the four questions below to guide the conversation and a virtues vocabulary list. Each conversation lasted between sixty

and ninety minutes, and started with an introduction, including discussion of the opportunity for the conversationalist to edit the transcript at a later stage.

   i)   I'm interested in the practice of research, especially research that might be called, broadly, educational – have some influence on practice. Could you tell me a little about your own research in this area, and how and why you came to be doing it? (This first question could include, as appropriate, consideration of what 'research' is, why it is labelled as such and any relationship of research to other aspects of education.)

   ii)   Can you describe one or two research projects (and the consequent publication/s), that demonstrate the way you go about research? (The publications might be added later, in correspondence with the conversationalist.)

   iii)   Can you give some examples of what you might call the main *research* challenges you faced, and how you dealt with those? (This question might also explore procedural ethics issues in the projects.)

   iv)   Can you give some examples of what you might call the main *personal* challenges you faced in this research, and how you dealt with them? (The issues raised in this question will often be related to the previous topic of discussion.)

Added to the fourth question would be follow-up discussion of the virtues vocabulary list (see Table 1). I also asked whether there are any other things to add, or any questions that the conversationalist wanted to ask or tell me about the project.

In relation to Stern's ideas on values and virtues and virtuous conversations I do not find helpful the term 'virtues' as this as a theological origin that conflicts with my own secular humanism. I also do not use the term educational conversation in the way Stern uses 'conversation'. What Stern writes about above I would characterize as a guided interview. I use 'conversation ' in the way described by Gadamer above. I think we (Pete, Marie and I) are using conversation in the same way?

4) **Have I offered and tested evidence to support our claim that, as we engage in Living Educational Theory research, we are extending and deepening educational conversations – conversations that are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.**

 I think that our contributions to the Educational Journal of Living Theories have contributed to extending and deepening our educational conversations. For example, Marie asked Jack to submit a paper to EJOLTS that reflected on the 30 years of his educational enquiries since the publication of his paper in the Cambridge Journal of Education. Without this urging and focus Jack says this would not have been produced.

Whitehead, J. (2019) Creating a living-educational-theory from questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?' 30 years on with Living Theory research. Educational Journal of Living Theories, 12(2): 1-19. Retrieved 16 October 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwejolts2019.pdf

Pete has extended and deepened our educational conversations in relation to relationally dynamic constellations of values and practice in explanations of educational influences in learning:

Mellett, P. (2020) Evolving Educational Influences in Learning: collaborative communities of practice, relationally-dynamic constellations of values and praxis. Educational Journal of Living Theories 13(1): 71-97. Retrieved 16 October 2020 from https://ejolts.net/node/357

Pete has also extended and deepened our educational conversations through his focus on moving from 'I' to 'We' through a good quality conversation:

Gumede, J. & Mellett, P. (2019) Forming a 'We' through a good-quality conversation
Educational Journal of Living Theories 12(1): 23-61. Retrieved 16 October 2020 from https://ejolts.net/node/335

> Starting with the production of intersecting autobiographical accounts, they form their 'We' by progressively helping each other to 'get on the inside' of each other's culture. In Living Theory terms, this is the process of each author's educational influence on the other. Engaging with de Santos' (1997) ideas of intercultural translation and with Jousse (1997) they seek "…discoveries [that] consist in the bringing together of ideas susceptible to being connected, which have hitherto been isolated" (p.49) to create a shared form of knowledge." Coming together to speak as 'We' also involves the identification of shared values and their expression in each of the author's separate lived contexts. These shared values lead them to identify a commonality within the tenets of Ubuntu – a person is a person through other persons – on which they base questions that have relevance for the future flourishing of Humanity.

Marie, as the Chair of the Educational Board of EJOLTs, has influenced our educational conversations through her focus on sharing the following editorial:

Huxtable, M. (2019) Editorial Foreword. Educational Journal of Living Theories 12(2): i-viii. https://ejolts.net/node/345

> I believe that readers and contributors to EJOLTs share my passion for generating and contributing knowledge to a global educational practitioner researcher knowledgebase with the hope that, in doing so, we add to the possibility of bringing into being a world where humanity flourishes. By that I mean a world where what flourishes is the humanity of us individually and together, living and learning as distinct yet indivisible parts of a complex relationally dynamic ecology of local and global social formations. I also mean a world where Humanity, as a species, flourishes in a world that evolves in dynamic tensions with all that comprise it. The

papers in this edition each show the contribution that Living Theory research as 'process', and living-educational-theories as 'product', have made to enhancing the lives and learning of individuals and local and global communities with hope for the flourishing of humanity.

It was also at Marie's urging that Jack wrote:

Whitehead, J. (2018) Living Theory research as a way of life. Bath, Brown Dog Books. Access from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwbook2018LTR.pdf

We were also influential in organising and contributing to the 1st Living Educational Theory Research Conference on the 27th June 2020 with the aim of enhancing the influence of Living Educational Theory Research as a global social movement:

http://www.spanglefish.com/livingtheoryresearchgathering/index.asp

What we have yet to demonstrate (a question) is that our **conversations are contributing to an emancipating, inclusive and egalitarian global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity?**

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