

What is Living Educational Theory (Living Theory) research and what are living-educational-theories (living-theories)?

A brief resume

'Living Educational Theory research' (often abbreviated in the literature to Living Theory) refers to a lexical definition of meaning which distinguishes Living Educational Theory research. Living Educational Theory research could also be thought of as the process that a practitioner researcher engages in to create their valid account of their 'living-educational-theory'.

A living-educational-theory (often abbreviated to living-theory or even living theory in the literature) is a term Whitehead (1989) coined to mean a valid, values-based explanation created by a practitioner-researcher of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in. "All living-theories are living, that is to say, evolving. All living-theories are lived, that is, the individual is trying to give as full an expression as they can to their life-affirming and life-enhancing values as they live and work, recognizing and resolving contradictions as far as they can. However, not all living theories are living-theories!" (<https://ejolts.net/files/284.pdf>)

Living Educational Theory research is a form of professional practitioner educational research used by educational-practitioners to understand, improve and explain their practice *and* generate valid accounts of their values-based 'explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others, and the learning of social formations' (Whitehead, 1989) as contributions to a global educational knowledgebase. The values that form the practitioners explanatory principles in such explanations and their standards by which they evaluate their practice emerge in the course of the research. Digital data is often used to both clarify and communicate these values. Practitioners engaged in Living Educational Theory Research often draw on various research methods such as Action Research, Narrative Enquiry and Auto-ethnography. Living Educational Theory Research is distinguishable by the form of logic, epistemology, explanations, standards of judgement and units of appraisal.

There appears to be some confusion about what distinguishes Living Educational Theory Research, the questions it can be used to answer, the purpose served and the knowledgebase the knowledge generated can contribute to. Living Educational Theory Research is often described as a form of professional educational-practitioner self-study research. The meaning of 'self-study' here is that of a practitioner recognising and accepting professional responsibility for their practice by researching to understand, improve and explain it and make public the knowledge generated as a contribution to an educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all. The knowledge generated is of the form that can be publicly validated, for instance using Habermas's criteria. That is distinguishable from 'self study' as a form of self inquiry to improve the person we are and want to be and to generate a theory of our self. A Living Educational Theory researcher may draw on what they learn through self inquiry but of itself it is not enough to constitute a living-educational-theory.

The evolving history of Living Educational Theory research can be seen in publications dating from 1967, many of which can be freely accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net>.