

## **Chapter 7 Living-Theory TASC: A relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis**

If you have engaged with this thesis by progressing from the preamble through each chapter in turn, I hope you feel you are beginning to understand what I mean by my ontological values of a loving recognition, a respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, and inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values. These values form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of my improving practice. I have outlined how developing educational gifted and talented theory, practice and provision is an expression of my embodied and evolving values, knowledge and living-theory praxis. In the last chapter, I showed how I make creative use of multimedia narratives in communicating my contributions to knowledge. I now want to explain more fully the approach I have taken to researching and developing my living-theory praxis through Living-Theory TASC.

The difference I shall be stressing between a Living-Theory approach and a TASC approach to research, and a Living-Theory TASC method of researching is the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra-connections between the organic and systematic phases of the research. Living-Theory TASC also enables the researcher to recognise, value and work with the knowledge they create of themselves, and themselves in and of the world, in the process of researching to create knowledge of the world. I contend that Living-Theory TASC can be employed by learners of all ages, whether they are young learners researching their passions or adults researching to improve their practice.

I understand a research method to be a tool fashioned and creatively employed to reveal and contribute to developing understandings and knowledge. In the context of evolving my living-theory praxis, the methods I employ need to enable me to understand and change the relationally-dynamic multidimensional nature of my work and to create valid, generative and transformational explanations of educational influence to improve what I do and to contribute to the learning of others and social formations. Drawing on Whitehead's Living-Theory (1989a) and Wallace's TASC (Wallace and Adams, 1993) I bring the methods I use together, into what I call Living-Theory TASC.

‘Whether or not a research approach or a means of representing it has been given a name, any format can be sufficiently “valid” if it makes a unique and substantial contribution to understanding the world better or to making it a better place to live, and our dissertation stories have proven this so.’ (Four Arrows -Don Trent Jacobs-, 2008, p.5)

My claim is that this thesis makes such a contribution, and that Living-Theory TASC offers a valid research approach.

Sections as signposts in this chapter

- 7.1 Overview
- 7.2 Living-Theory TASC
- 7.3 Creating knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world
- 7.4 Postscript

## 7.1 Overview

Creating and making public valid accounts of the knowledge created is an integral aspect of Living-Theory TASC research. Sometimes the gift of that knowledge may be offered to an unknown other in the living-boundary between self and the world, for instance as a published paper. At other times, it may be offered to a few people in a negotiated space. Wherever the gift of knowledge is eventually offered, the creation of a research account that can communicate beyond self, offers an opportunity to deepen and evolve learning and research.

The stories in the narrative of improving practice to be told are arrived at through an organic process, birthed and evolved through flowing, complex interconnecting relationships and experiences, between learners and educators as they enquire together. However, to communicate a practitioner researcher has to provide a narrative with their ideas ordered systematically (Carter, 1993). In the process of creating and offering such research accounts a person can come to recognise, value and enhance the knowledge they have created beyond what is possible when it remains ephemeral and unarticulated, or intuitive and subconscious. There is something important about talking the walk, and articulating thoughts clearly enough to create an account that communicates to others beyond the moment. To create such an account, however, takes energy. Energy is often consumed by the stresses and strains of dealing with the daily demands made by others, such as inspectors demanding compliance of Headteachers with government imposed standards, or teachers demanding compliance of their pupils to acquire particular skills or knowledge. As a consequence creating a research account may often be relegated to the backburner, waiting for that fanciful ‘when I have time’, which never comes. A spur is often needed. Making a commitment to creating an account for a purpose, such as accreditation or a journal or conference paper, can be the motivator needed to make time for, and devote energy to, what is important. Where to start, and how to proceed, are two questions that I hope to answer in clarifying Living-Theory TASC.

The research method I have evolved, comprises a synthesis of a Living-Theory approach to action research (Whitehead, 1989, 2012) and TASC developed by Belle Wallace (Wallace and Adams, 1993, Wallace, 2008) and incorporates multimedia narratives as a means of recognising, understanding and communicating energy-flowing values, as I detailed in the previous chapter.

This is the Living-Theory approach to action research from Whitehead on which I draw:

What is my concern?  
 Why am I concerned?  
 What am I going to do about it?  
 What data will I gather to help me to judge my effectiveness?  
 How does the data help me to clarify the meanings of my embodied values as these emerge in practice?  
 What values-based explanatory principles do I use to explain my educational influence?  
 How do I use my values-based standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of my claims to be improving my practice?  
 How will I strengthen the validity of my values-based explanations of my educational influences in learning?

The diagram below (Figure 24) shows the steps of enquiry of TASC



**Figure 26 The steps of enquiry in the TASC approach (Wallace et al., 2004)**

Through engaging with TASC and Living-Theory research, I have come to understand a disciplined process of enquiry that is comprehensible to children and adults, and is an expression of a pedagogy that resonates with me:

‘Education *for* democracy can only be developed by education *through* democracy...’ (Wallace and Adams, 1993, p.2)

The diagrammatic representation of TASC (Wallace et al., 2004) given above in Figure 24 is attractive, neat and colourful. However, the children working with Joy Mounter (2007) I introduced you to in Chapter 3 (pages 105-106) told Belle it does not communicate the multidimensional, interrelated flow that is the actuality of their learning. The children built a model (Figure 25) to communicate such a flow of energy. They used colour to show the flow, and represented the learning and knowledge created

erupting up through the centre, the heart of the enterprise, as a shower of sparks on what is in the present and future.



Figure 25 Joy Mounter's pupils' model of their learning

You may have to use your imagination more to understand the systematic aspect of living-theory TASC as a multidimensional zero-spiral knot illustrated in a 2D representation in Figure 26.

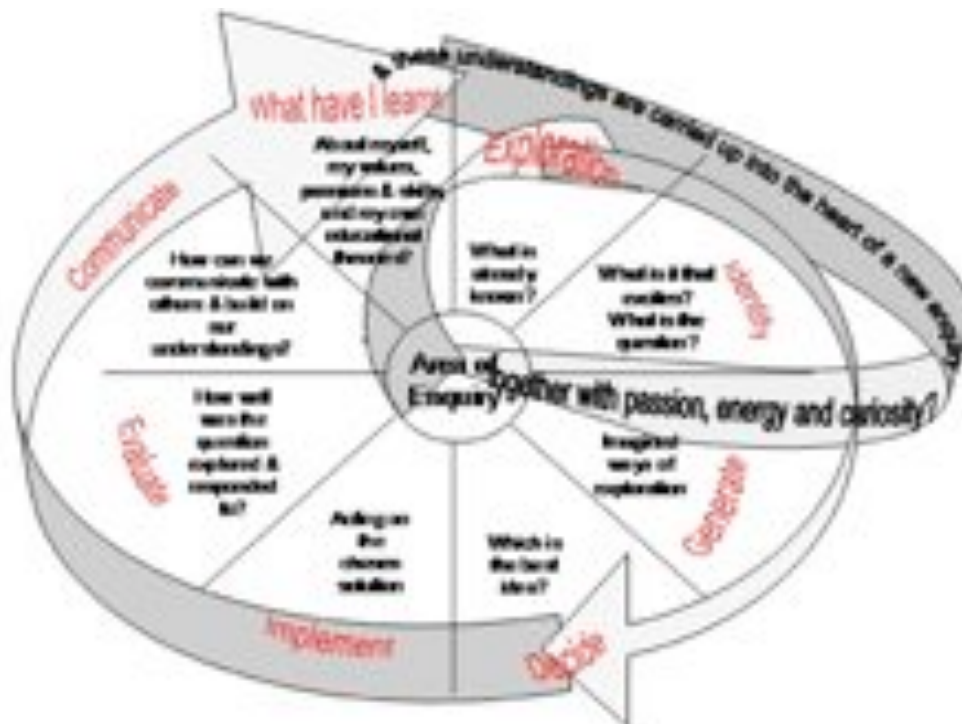


Figure 26 Living-Theory TASC Knot (author's work)

In the organic phase of Living-Theory TASC I may at various times, or at the same time, be gathering and organising what is known in the field, implementing a plan of action, or clarifying my concern. I may use qualitative and quantitative methods developed by social scientists, and

draw on theories and knowledge developed by academics and practitioners in various fields and disciplines. What I use and draw on is influenced by whether it helps me understand and improve what I am doing. I go into more detail about the inter-relationship of the systematic and the organic phase of enquiry later in this chapter.

In bringing TASC and Living-Theory together, I sought to describe a research method that:

- Holds together the organic and systematic phases of educational research in a relationally-dynamic multidimensional manner;
  - Connects research to create knowledge of the world, with educational research to create knowledge of self and self in and of the world.

For simplicity I call this method Living-Theory TASC.

Sonia Hutchinson and Paul Falkus (both members of the CPD/Masters group I supported) inspired my notions of learning journeys and learning adventures. The sections of this chapter, and the other chapters in this thesis, can be conceived of as learning journeys within my learning adventure of evolving my living-theory praxis. To travel without a predefined destination I conceptualise as an adventure, or play, whereas to travel with a destination, even if very vague, I conceptualise as a journey. An adventure provides the openness to as yet unimagined possibilities, and journeys may enable the adventure to evolve rather than stagnate. A learning adventure that does not integrate learning and knowledge created and acquired on the journeys may become sterile, repetitive and superficial. I will not go further with those metaphors here, but will leave you to play with them to see if this helps you understand what I am trying to communicate of Living-Theory TASC in the evolution of my living-theory praxis as a multidimensional relationally-dynamic process, formed and informed by the complex ecology of my practice and being.

## 7.2 Living-Theory TASC

To explain Living-Theory TASC, I will take you through the process step-by-step. However, I do not wish to imply that Living-Theory TASC is a research method to be followed in a step-by-step fashion. Medawar (1969) points out this error:

‘...scientific ‘papers’ in the form in which they are communicated to learned journals are notorious for misrepresenting the processes of thought that led to whatever discoveries they describe.’ (p. 8)

You cannot know where you are going unless either you or someone else has already been there, and this presents a difficulty to those who will not take the first step on a learning adventure without knowing precisely what it is, where it is going to take them, or knowing in advance what they will experience. It is not uncommon for people who come new to the

CPD/Masters groups I have run with Jack Whitehead to say they sit for a few weeks in a fog and find it difficult to recognise the structure of Living-Theory research: a penny may then drop even if they can not necessarily articulate what that penny is. The penny may drop in different ways for different people, but I hope in articulating Living-Theory TASC that I might help others to find their own way and develop their sophistication and expertise researching to create and integrate their knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world.

So, where to begin researching? The short answer is, begin wherever you are. Collingwood (1991) describes something of the fog and struggle with which I empathise, and how he began a new enquiry:

‘There came upon me by degrees, after this, a sense of being burdened with a task whose nature I could not define except by saying, ‘I must think.’ What I was to think about I did not know; and when, obeying this command I fell silent and absent-minded in company, or sought solitude in order to think without interruption, I could not have said, and still cannot say, what it was that I actually thought. There were no particular questions that I asked myself; there were no special objects upon which I directed my mind; there was only a formless and aimless intellectual disturbance; as if I were wrestling with a fog.

I know now that this is what always happens when I am in the early stages of work on a problem. Until the problem has gone a long way towards being solved, I do not know what it is; all I am conscious of is this vague perturbation of mind, this sense of being worried about I cannot say what.’ (pp.4-5)

Rather than trying to impose structure and define a route at this point, I have found that, like Collingwood, allowing myself to be in the fog and writing about what comes to mind at that time often seems to clarify what is important. That then becomes part of the research, even if it does not seem to give rise directly and immediately to the formulation of research questions. The research question that does finally emerge is not one located in an idealised world of tomorrow, which never happens, but in the here-and-now, given all the constraints and tensions of the real world, of which we are a part of and wish to improve.

Graham, who describes himself as an essayist, programmer, and investor, offers a similar insight into how to begin in ‘*The Age of the Essay*’:

‘... Essayer is the French verb meaning "to try" and an *essai* is an attempt. An essay is something you write to try to figure something out.

Figure out what? You do not know yet. And so you can’t begin with a thesis, because you do not have one, and may never have one. An essay doesn’t begin with a statement, but with a question. In a real

essay, you do not take a position and defend it. You notice a door that's ajar, and you open it and walk in to see what's inside.

If all you want to do is figure things out, why do you need to write anything, though? Why not just sit and think? Well, there precisely is Montaigne's great discovery. Expressing ideas helps to form them. Indeed, helps is far too weak a word. Most of what ends up in my essays I only thought of when I sat down to write them. That's why I write them.

In the things you write in school you are, in theory, merely explaining yourself to the reader. In a real essay you're writing for yourself. You're thinking out loud.' (Graham, 2004)

Graham points to a first hurdle for someone employing Living-Theory TASC to overcome. The tendency is to want to dash to the end and write to explain yourself to the reader. This is what I am calling a 'readerly text'. This thesis is in the form of a '**readerly text**': a text, or multimedia narrative, that attracts and holds the attention of the reader, and communicates the knowledge I have created educationally. By that I mean I want to communicate in such a way that my account of my living-theory stimulates the imagination of readers in a manner that enhances their own learning and research. To create a 'readerly text' I begin by creating a '**writerly text**'. I create a writerly text in the first place not with a view to what the readerly text may be but, like Graham, to enable me to recognise, value and work with the knowledge I have created in the process of researching to improve my living-theory praxis. I am not using the phrases 'readerly text' or 'writerly text' in the form meant by Barthes, which Hall (2001) explains:

'To summarize, a text can be seen as readerly or writerly depending upon the positioning of the reader. Barthes (1976) described this as follows.

. . . literature may be divided into that which gives the reader a role, a function, a contribution to make, and that which renders the reader idle or redundant, left with no more than the poor freedom to accept or reject the text and which thereby reduces him to that apt but impotent symbol of the bourgeois world, an inert consumer to the author's role as producer. (Barthes, 1976: 113)'

(Hall, 2001, p. 155)

Barthes is concerned with clarifying the role of the reader. I am concerned in the first place with the role and purpose of creating the account for the creator. I am using the phrases 'readerly text' and 'writerly text' as I have understood them from observing Jack Whitehead's use of the phrases as he has supported Masters and Doctoral students researching and making their embodied knowledge public. The beginning of these writerly texts invariably begins with Jack urging "write about what is important to you",

and then, “keep writing until you have written yourself out”. This writing often includes incidences of childhood that have influenced the development of their values as well as current concerns. The researcher is encouraged to share these early writings within the educational research group. When the work is articulated it enables the researcher and others to share and learn from their responses. This co-operative enquiry often helps each person to clarify their ontological values as they emerge in the living-boundary between what is private and personal. It is an important movement for many, when they move from solitary introspection to having the confidence and trust in themselves and others to offer their not knowing in the living boundary, between i~we. This is the point in the TASC process concerned with ‘communicating to and with others’, and ‘what have I learned about myself and my self in and of the world as I have enquired’. As the writings and a focus begins to emerge the researcher draws in work created in the organic phase of their research.

In the organic phase numerous multimedia narratives can be created, which may appear to have no coherence or even relevance at the time. This may not be when they have a focus or even an intention to create an account. The researcher may begin by telling, often apparently disconnected, stories of what is important to them, and a brief autobiographical story to help them begin to clarify their values and beliefs, and recognise their embodied and acquired knowledge. As their thinking progresses they can begin to see where they are living a contradiction, what they need to do differently, and imagine possibilities, act accordingly, evaluate and so on.

The question to be addressed through the research, the data to collect, and the form of the process, are often not known at the beginning, and may only emerge as the enquiry proceeds. Sometimes this is a case of recognising that the enquiry has been going on for years, and the researcher may have unrecognised data scattered about them as Barry Hymer (2007) found when working on his doctoral thesis.

In the organic phase of research, stories may be created variously as time, other commitments and interests move. On one occasion, you may be reading, and find work that excites you and create notes for yourself while working on an action-reflection cycle dictated by circumstances or interest. On another occasion, you may get an idea of something you might do, but do not follow through in action although this took your thinking forward. As you move through life and create trails in the form of narratives, notes, images and videos, when you move from reflecting-in-action to reflect *on* action, you have data scattered round to draw on as you work on the systematic phase of your research.

This thesis was created in the first place as a writerly text and then I worked with it to develop it as a readerly text. In my head while I type, images and thoughts vie for attention, but even as one is brought into sharper focus, I am aware of the contribution of others. I can look around my room and in focusing on the purring of my cat, the warmth and softness of his body against my elbow, the hues of his fur, I am still conscious of other sounds, senses and sights, which are part of my physical space and all contribute to



what I am experiencing. My mental and emotional worlds could be similarly described. There are also other worlds created in the interplay between worlds, as you might recognise as I described the focus on my cat. How much you recognise depends somewhat on how far beyond the discreteness of words you go to allow an image to be created in your imagination. You might guess from my mention of my cat, and the pleasure I experience of his presence, that there is a history between us, and if you can empathise (even if you are a felinophobe) a picture is beginning to form in your imagination of what I might be like, the setting I am in, and so on. However, as Lather puts it when talking of ‘ironic validity’:

‘The text is resituated as a representation of its ‘failure to represent what it points toward but can never reach.... (Lather, 1994, p. 40-41).’ (Donmoyer, 1996 p. 21)

I am aware that as I write any words, I am doing so with my lifetime of experience that embraces my head, heart and body, and you are reading them with your own. ‘A picture is worth a 1,000 words’ as the well-known saying goes. I add a picture of one of the cats, which share my home with me, to increase the possibility of what you experience coming a little closer to mine and so that a readerly text may communicate better.



**Figure 27 Fatcat!**

Working with video and accompanying text to produce a multimedia narrative further clarifies the thinking for reader and researcher.

A metaphor that I like that helps me describe the purposes and manner of developing a readerly text is the one Louise Cripps told me about of an art exhibition. An artist forms various art pieces, sometimes in response to a commission, sometimes as an exploration of the different use of material and tools, sometimes just from idly playing with material, or in response to having seen other artists work or thoughts emerging from conversations or events. Not all pieces are finished or perfected. I have a picture in my head of a room cluttered with clay and canvas, books spilling off shelves, and balanced in precarious towers on the floor in a sea of papers. The image of Andrew Henon’s video in support of his Masters dissertation, ‘The making of art works and the work of art’, (Henon, 2008) comes to mind, as I envisage the artist mindfully preoccupied in mellow mood and music. You can get a sense of what I experience within the first few seconds of video 20.



**Video 20 Andrew Henon – video in support of Masters dissertation (16mins 05secs)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dt2j1DIttE>

Then the possibilities of an exhibition emerge, and a systematic phase of research may be embarked upon. Pieces are explored from the perspective of the exhibition theme, gathered together and re-examined as they are organised and rearranged until the focus of the exhibition is clarified.

Various possibilities for the nature of the exhibition are imagined and one decided upon, taking into account the venue, finance, audience and so on. Then the work on the exhibition is undertaken, and its success evaluated. Sitting quietly afterwards with a glass of wine the artist as researcher developing their living-theory praxis reflects back on: What went well and what did not? What have they learned about them self as artist and as the person they are and want to be in the world? Did they express their values as fully as they could? What talents did they develop and what do they want to enhance further and how? What do they now want to do to continue to live a loving, satisfying and productive life that is worthwhile? And so the questions tumble out, and their thinking progresses as they struggle to answer them. However, without making some account, that learning will be lost to the them and to others.

We see what we look for through our continually developing lenses honed by our responses and interactions with the complex ecology of our lives. Elkins (1997) describes the complexity and inter-relational nature of looking. Neugarten (2003) in his paper on ‘seeing’ and ‘noticing’ points to a creative and dynamic process:

‘... it is not so much our eyes that see, but rather our brains. Far from ‘seeing is believing’, what we believe can seriously affect what we see. We shall show that ‘there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball’, and that looking too hard, getting too close, and being too focused is often counterproductive...’ (p.93)

So, we get what we look for. Similarly the way in which I create imaginings of my reality forms that reality and questions can only be formed with a thought for their answers. However the process is subtle in its complexity. In trying to describe a Living-Theory TASC research process I therefore need to use a variety of devices to enhance our communication and share understanding. These devices include words as text in various forms, poetic, narrative, metaphors, photographs, pictures, drawings, video, using different voices and so on. I recognise that the devices of representation themselves are an integral part of the research method and may influence what is researched and the knowledge created. I addressed this issue when I discussed evaluation and the creative use of multimedia narrative in the previous chapter. For now I wish to remain focused on a Living-Theory TASC process.

In communicating to and with my self and others, to make sense of the organic flow of the adventure and journeys I have been on, I begin to understand what I have been doing. I begin to form an explanation emerging from as yet undescribed events. I am seeking to understand and theorise not only what has emerged of my physical and social world, but also to understand myself – the world within - and myself in and of the world. What values have I used to account for and explain my improving practice, what do I understand about myself as a learner, in relation to others, the passions I can now recognise I had, and may want to pursue, which will drive the systematic phase of the research?

I recognise that a common key to Living-Theory TASC lies in the sections, ‘communicate’ to and with others, and ‘what have I learnt’. Whitehead points to the same place in the process when he says that it is often the last thing that is written which is the point that needs to be brought to the front. You may not know, or recognise the significance of what you have done, until you have done it. The act of reappraising is not just a cognitive activity: reappraisal to enhance my educational influence involves heart and body as well as head. It is an act of extending self a loving recognition, developing respectful connectedness within self and expressing an educational responsibility towards others and for self.

Respectful connectedness within my self may sound odd. I am aware of those boundaries within others, intra-personal worlds, and try not to inadvertently ‘lean on the doors of others they do not want opened’. There are boundaries between, for instance, private, personal, public, professional inter-personal worlds. They are fluid, ill-defined, culturally influenced if not determined, but recognisable particularly when transgressed. To use the metaphor with which I started this thesis, sometimes it takes the particles in smoke to make visible the energy expressed as ‘light’ and ‘flow’, which we tacitly know.

There are also internal places that I know I have constructed boundaries around to help me deal with experiences, which may, for instance, be painful or damaging. Much of psychotherapeutic theory and practice is built on such a premise. Some approaches focus on breaking down such boundaries, others on building them up. For me, this is well illustrated by

the figure of Dali's (Figure 28), that Jack Whitehead offered me in a conversation about such matters when I first began working with him. For Dali, opened drawers represent those issues in his psyche that he feels he has explored fully. Closed drawers represent those issues that have not been explored. I believe it is a matter of personal decision whether 'drawers' are opened or closed, and I respect my own decision about when, or even whether, to explore issues at the core of my psyche. I try to show the same respect for the decisions of others as to whether they choose to explore such issues and when and whether 'drawers' are opened or closed.



**Figure 28** Dali's sculpture **Anthropomorphic Cabinet** (Image accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012 from <http://sites.google.com/site/mustbu/anthropomorphiccabinet>)

Perhaps this explains why I have been so attracted to the idea of developing generative and transformational possibilities within boundaries, rather than venturing into the worlds that comprise them. I can invite a person into the living-boundary between us without trespassing. There are often times when it is unclear whether to test the timeliness of exploring new drawers, or re-exploring ones that appear opened, but I appreciate that I do not have to live with the consequences of often well-intentioned, intimate, yet naïve enquiry.

As I reflect on what I have learned through my enquiry. I do so with a growing awareness of being respectful of my own boundaries, those between me and other worlds, and those within me, and the co-creative possibilities of acting within those boundaries while not violating them. A loving recognition is appreciative and respectful of those boundaries while offering opportunities within them for creating knowledge of self, and self in and of the world. This holds generative, transformational and life-enhancing possibilities for the places that form the boundaries.

As I have said, I think I go through two phases in researching. I understand research to be about trying to make sense of my worlds in a way that is generative and transformational for me and contributes generative and transformational possibilities for others. I have briefly reflected on the

organic phase. As I consider the *systematic* phase bear in mind that I have written that the form of Living-Theory TASC is relationally-dynamic and multidimensional, within phases and between phases. In the systematic phase, the work does not go clockwise round the 'wheel', even when creating an account. This thesis is testament to what I mean. For instance, in the process of trying to produce an account that might communicate to you, I have organised and reorganised the material and reorganised it again as new learning emerges. Such an approach is also to be found in other disciplines, as illustrated by this reflection:

'I used to be a designer/engineer – you can't do that if you don't work iteratively. We also try and develop some of our IT systems in what we call a spiral fashion, tweaking and improving as we go along. Look at how Google rolls out new improvements, versus how Microsoft issues updates. I know which I prefer – iteratively.'  
(personal communication from Michael Neugarten, 12 November 2011)

Research is often thought by educators to start with 'exploration', laying out what is already known, or as TASC would have it, 'gather and organise'. I would like to take Whitehead's ideas of values and embodied living-educational-theory being revealed through researching to improve practice, and suggest a starting place of 'learning from experience'. As I reflect over what has been, I ask myself questions such as:

What have I learnt about my values, myself, my passions?  
What skills and understandings have I extended?  
What talents have I developed and which do I need to develop?  
How does what I have learnt connect with other ideas?  
What knowledge have I created that I value?  
How have I affected others?  
How have I contributed to and benefited from my own learning and the learning of others?  
What are my embodied educational theories and beliefs?  
What do I want to explore now?

As I discussed in the previous chapter I am aware that I create stories about my life, which move from descriptions to explanations and shape the life I am living. The creation of a 'readerly text' as a form of account that communicates to others is part of the living-theory research process. This serves a different purpose to the traditional research report and is integral to living-theory TASC. Most people, are, unfortunately, not introduced in school to writing to enhance their own understandings, and as adults, have experienced the futility of producing a report of what they have done, for no other reason than that is what 'ticks the box'. Practically the first response I get from educators when I suggest that they may like/wish to research their practice is, 'this ... sounds great and I would love to - as long as I do not have to write!' I sympathise. I too am in recovery from the damage I experienced in my school career. I continue to suffer when required to write a report of what I have done for no other reason than to justify the past. I shudder at the continual damage that is done to countless generations who

are taught to equate writing meaningfully for themselves and others and thoughtfully accepting knowledge offered as a gift through literature of all sorts, with what they are taught they should value through the English curriculum and prevailing dominant forms of enquiry in the Academy. Can write, won't write. Can read, won't read. And that from educators!

To move on, having considered 'communicating to and with others', and 'what I have learned', the understandings are carried up into the heart of the enquiry where the questions concerning what is of importance, and *why*, begin to emerge as the researcher connects with the anticipated audience of the account. The *why* is an important question to pose and comes directly from the Living-Theory research process. I have seen the affect that posing that question has had on students beginning to enquire into what is important to them. It deepened their understanding not only of the discipline related enquiry but their understanding of themselves and how they want to be in the world. The affect on the research of teachers has similarly been deepened as can be seen in the Masters assignments on <http://www.actionresearch.net>

I like the way TASC specifically identifies 'gather and organise knowledge' particularly relevant to the account. This reminds me explicitly of the i~we relationship, and the value of gifts of knowledge offered by self and others, and the new knowledge generated in the process of organising what is known. The number of rewrites of this thesis offers an example of what I mean here.

The next sections of the Living-Theory TASC are well explored and documented in work on TASC and Living-Theory action research: what is the question/ what do I want to improve; imagining possibilities and selecting one; implementing and evaluating.

The difference I want to stress with understanding a Living-Theory TASC method of researching is the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases. The circle at the top of the drawing shown below (Figure 29) represents the systematic phase with interconnections and with the organic phase represented beneath.



**Figure 29 Inter-relationship between organic and systematic phases of research**

Claxton and Lucas (2004) offer me a metaphor when they describe how to 'see' a stereoscopic picture. 'To 'see' the picture in a 'magic-eye picture', you must maintain a point of soft focus beyond the page in order to see what is on it.' (p.61) When you do that you can then explore what is close. 'Engage with the whole beyond the sum of its parts, and from that place explore the detail.' (Huxtable, 2006b, p.4)

They use the exercise of 'soft focus' or focusing in the distance, to enable the observer to 'see' a stereoscopic picture. The image in the foreground can only be seen if you relax and focus in the distance. As I focus on researching my daily practice, I maintain an awareness of the relational-dynamic and multidimensional connections with people and possibilities past, present and imagined futures and living my values. The picture by Dali

(Figure 30) communicates the fluidity of energy flows that are, for me, inherent in being human in and of the world, and the nature of educational relationships, space and opportunities that living-theory research encompasses.



**Figure 30** Dalí's, 'Soft Watch at the Moment of First Explosion.' (Image accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012 from <http://blueskies-baller.blogspot.com/2010/12/salvador-dali.html>)

Before leaving this section I want to stress that creating a living-theory account is an educational process for the creator. In making accounts public a researcher can enhance his or her educational influence in their own learning, that of others and social formations in a co-operative, co-creative process.

In the School Wide Enrichment (Renzulli, 1997) and TASC (Wallace et al., 2004), reflection is primarily concerned with the metacognitive: although Renzulli and Wallace allude to something more the major focus is on 'learning' as a process to create knowledge of the world. I value their work highly and want to build on it with a shift of emphasis by incorporating insights drawn from Whitehead's work on Living-Theory (Whitehead, 1989) with the focus on making embodied knowledge public and giving values based explanations. The integration of Living-Theory and TASC enables me to understand a research method to improve what I am doing as an educator, creating and developing educational relationships, space and opportunities and to support researchers, irrespective of age of interest, to enhance their sophistication as a learner, creating knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world. This has entailed presenting learners with a challenge many are not comfortable with. Leigh (2002) talks of 'facilitator'



in a way I recognise 'educator'. I quote her at length because she describes the complaint I have heard from learners of all ages when an educator behaves as an educator and not as an instructor or traditional teacher.

'A 'facilitator' of open simulations' does so in particularly complex and intricate circumstances. They are sometimes implored to abandon 'facilitation' and take on a 'leader' role as participants feel less and less certain of the efficacy of their 'taken for granted' habits and seek a return to the stability of the known and familiar – however poor or unproductive it is being revealed to be.

'What is an 'expert' facilitator?

In my opinion, an 'expert' facilitator is anyone able to appropriately resist such entreaties in the interests of sustaining the 'instability' and uncertainty that precedes emergence of new understanding and insights into personal and/or group behaviour. Conversely they are also able to help participants identify and integrate personal learning moments into the larger whole of their lives. And they may find themselves doing so, moment by moment as awareness of needs and the impact of particular experiences brings new understanding.'

(p.10)

This is also a good example of learning being slow, and sometimes it is only upon reflecting back on a particular place in a journey that generative and transformational learning can take place. This reminds me of Jane Spiro's story 'Learner and Teacher as Fellow Travellers' in her doctorate (Spiro, 2008). The story can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/janespiropdfphd/storyepilogue.pdf>. It was only when Jane was a long way from where she had been, and when she was in the 'right' emotional, physical and intellectual place, that she could appreciate the educational significance of her experiences and the contribution they had made to her current journey and that journey yet to come:

'... I unfolded all the contents of my travels around me and spread them on the ground. How to fit them together? Surely they could never be crafted into one coherent and beautiful piece?

But as I stared at them hour after hour alone now outside the gates of my destination, it all became clear.'

I read Jane's story in 2005, and it still resonates with me. I hope you might take the time to read it. It says so much about the way I want to be, how I want adults as educators to be with children and young people, and what I want the personal reflective learning space to be. I have worked in similar vein with Joy Mounter on 'Spirals', which is a physical expression of a repository for reflection.

### 7.3 Creating knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world

I have endeavoured to give you some insight into how I understand Living-Theory TASC as a multidimensional and relationally-dynamic research method. The description I have given of Living-Theory TASC has been with adults, and particularly educators, researching to improve their practice, in mind. The knowledge of the world, which they create and offer as a gift, is of their values-based practice. In the process, they come to create knowledge of themselves in the form of those values that give their lives purpose and meaning. They also create knowledge of themselves in and of the world, and, to borrow from Ghandi, how they can be more of the change they want to see. The knowledge of their living values emerges in the living-boundary, the ~ space in i~we, as they create and communicate their living-theory account.

I believe children and young people are also, with the support of educators, able to engage in Living-Theory TASC research to create and offer as a gift, knowledge of the world and in the process, create knowledge of themselves and themselves in and of the world. The form of research that is offered to the young, such as Kellett (2005) describes, has the same limitations that traditional forms of social science research confers on educators. I have explored those issues in Chapter 2.

In extending TASC to integrate the insights of Living-Theory research as I have illustrated as living-theory TASC, more time and support is given to the learner to enable them to deepen their understanding of themselves through communicating to and with others what they have learned. This is through their enquiry about themselves and themselves in and of the world. It relates to knowledge of the social and cultural influences on them of the context within which they live, and knowledge and of their ontological and social values, the talents they have and want to develop, their motivations, the nature of the world they want to bring into being through how they are, what gifts they want to create and offer to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others. The work done with Philosophy for Children (Hymer, 2007) shows that even young children can demonstrate they are capable of:

- Valuing themselves as an expert able to develop their expertise in their own learning
- Developing and enhancing talents
- Creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, themselves and themselves in and of the world as a gift, to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others
- Coming to know and give living expression to the values that give their life meaning and purpose and create their own living-theory.

The work of Joy Mounter with 7-year-olds and Sally Cartwright with 17-year-olds shows that children and young people are capable of developing their living-theory praxis given time, encouragement and the support of a

skilled educator to explore their values, talents, expertise and embodied living knowledge as they emerge in the living-boundary, in the ~ space, in an i~we relationship.

Others like Pring (2000), emphasise the importance of self-study as an educational process:

‘One remains ignorant and powerless unless, through learning, one acquires the concepts and knowledge which dispel that ignorance and enable one to understand oneself and others, and one’s obligations and responsibilities. Learning is essential to becoming fully a person. Through learning one acquires the ideals which ennoble and motivate, the standards by which one might evaluate one’s own performances and those of others. Adolescence, in particular, is a period in which young people seek to find their distinctive identities – the sort of persons they are or might become, the ideals that are worth striving for, the qualities that they wish to be respected for, the talents that need to be developed, the kind of relationship in which they will find enrichment, the style of life that is worth pursuing.’ (p.19)

However, Pring is not making the connection with self-study or with practitioners researching themselves to improve what they are doing. Pring goes on to explore questions of the form, ‘who am I?’ I find such questions can become abstract and disconnected from my question as an educator wanting to improve my practice. Frankl (1984) makes this point in explaining his contribution to the field of psychotherapy:

‘One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone’s task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed. Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognise that it is *he* who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering *for* his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence.’ (p.131)

‘...the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system.’ (p.133)

What I am suggesting is that practitioner self-study does not stand apart from the creation of knowledge of the world. Nor should it be in place of the given curriculum prescribed by school and government. Rather, as I have explained earlier, education comprises various curricula including the living

personal(ised) curriculum of each individual child and young person engaged in passion-led learning.

#### **7.4 Postscript**

Living-theory TASC is the method I employ to support myself as learner to create and offer accounts of the knowledge I create of my practice, and living-theory accounts of the knowledge I create of myself, and myself in and of the world. I keep my educational intent in sharp focus while not losing focus required by the instructional and training functions that organisations, institutions and practitioners are primarily required by government to concern themselves with. The multimedia narratives as artefacts assessed by and with me as learner, contribute to the educational learning of myself as student, and my educational evaluation of my practice.

In this chapter I have clarified the relationally-dynamic and multidimensional nature of Living-Theory TASC as an educational research method. I have then continued to explain how this might be of use to educators supporting learners to integrate their research to create knowledge of the world with that to create knowledge of themselves and themselves in and of the world, and learn what it might be for them to live a satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for themselves and others. In the next chapter I bring this thesis to its conclusion and offer suggestions of where this may go in the future.