Creating and Sustaining Academic Networks for Global Education and Learning with Values of Human Flourishing: A Living Educational Theory Research Approach

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Abstract

This Living Educational Theory Research (LETR) approach, to creating and sustaining an Academic Network for Global Education and Learning, is grounded in the urgent need, recognized by ANGEL (2026), to document, research, re-invigorate and continue to reimagine the role of global education as a force for peace, justice, and collective action in the face of war, environmental crises, deepening inequalities, and the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism. The LETR research approach draws data from over 50 doctorates and publications of research papers in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (LETR. 2008-2026). It centres questions of power, voice, and purpose in moving beyond rhetoric towards meaningful and transformative practice whilst strengthening the collective impact of research on global education theory, policy, and practice. It is guided by the conceptual framework and commitments of the 'Dublin Declaration'. The research contributes to breaking down disciplinary boundaries. It includes ANGEL members' emphasis on the importance of decolonial, feminist, indigenous, and Global South perspectives, alongside critical examinations of neoliberalism, colonial legacies, and contemporary geopolitical dynamics for research in global education. It translates research and evidence into educational action in the communities of practice at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2025.pdf , the Education, Development and Sustainability Group at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/eds24.pdf and the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group in their Living Educational Theory Research at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf . It is distinguished by individual practitioners accepting their responsibility to research their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their practice is grounded, with values of human flourishing, and helping others to do so too.

Introduction

Our inclusion of a brief history of both Living Educational Theory Research (LETR) and Global Education (GE) is because of our belief that studying the past helps in understanding the

present, as our current context are influenced by human choices over time. We believe that understanding past conflicts and policy mistakes can help leaders and citizens to make wiser decisions in constructing the future. We also believe that historical understanding can help to bridge cultural divides and borders in becoming more open-minded global citizens and global educators, through fostering empathy.

A LETR approach to professional development was developed by Whitehead in the 1980s as an alternative to the Disciplines Approach to Educational Theory. In the Disciplines Approach, Educational Theory was constituted by the disciplines of the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. Whitehead questioned this approach because he could not derive a valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanation for his educational influences in his own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which his practice was located, from the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines, either individually or in any combination. This led Whitehead to redefine Educational Theory as constituted by the valid, evidence-based and values-laden professional practitioners' explanations of their educational, values-laden influences in their own learning as professional practitioners, in the learning of others to realise their values-laden purpose/s, and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice was located to realise its productive purposes with values of human flourishing. Evidence that supports our contention that as practitioners engage in LETR they document, research, re-invigorate and continue to reimagine the role of global education as a force for peace, justice, and collective action in the face of war, environmental crises, deepening inequalities, and the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism, can be accessed from the doctorates and publications in EJOLTs at:

https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml for Living Theory doctorates.

https://ejolts.net/ for publications in EJOLTs.

To help to understand the unique contribution of LETR to ANGEL, a history of Global Education has been included. This includes insights from 'The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050' (Dublin Declaration, 2022), retrieved from https://www.gene.eu/ge2050-congress. It includes the following definition of Global Education:

> Global Education is education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future. Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education.

We have organized our paper in the following way to fulfil the claims we make in the Abstract.

Living-educational-theories of professional educators:

i) As a force for peace, justice, and collective action in the face of war, environmental crises, deepening inequalities, and the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism.
ii) In terms of power, voice, and purpose in moving beyond rhetoric towards meaningful and transformative practice whilst strengthening the collective impact of research on global education theory, policy, and practice.
iii) To explain how the research contributes to breaking down disciplinary boundaries.
iv) To includes the emphasis of global education "the importance of decolonial, feminist, indigenous, and Global South perspectives, alongside critical examinations of neoliberalism, colonial legacies, and contemporary geopolitical dynamics for research in global education."
v) To translate research and evidence into educational action in the communities of practice of the Education, Development and Sustainability Group at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/eds24.pdf and the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group in their Living Educational Theory Research at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf and in EJOLTs at http://www.ejolts.net

1) As a force for peace, justice, and collective action in the face of war, environmental crises, deepening inequalities, and the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism.

Whitehead was born on the 29th August 1944 when the forces of nationalism and authoritarianism, led by Fascists in Germany and Japan had contributed to the second world war in which values of human flourishing of peace, justice and collective action were been suppressed with violations that included crimes against humanity in concentration camps. Two survivors, Victor Frankl (2006, 2019) and Edith Egar (2017) have both responded with the hope that is grounded in the individual's recognition of agency, in responding to conditions where, what is being done in violating values of human flourishing, is beyond an individual's control, except within the response to what is being done. As Frankl (2019) has written about education for responsibility:

> But on average, people are too sluggish to shoulder their responsibilities. And this is where education for responsibility begins. Certainly, the burden is heavy, it is difficult not only to recognise responsibility but also to commit to it. To say yes to it and to life. But there have been people who have said yes despite all difficulties. And when the inmates in the Buchenwald concentration camp sang in their song, 'We still want to say yes to life', they did not only sing about it, but also achieved it many times – they and many of us in the other camps as well. And they achieved it under unspeakable conditions, external and internal conditions that we have already spoken enough about today. So, shouldn't we all be able to achieve it today in, after all, incomparably milder circumstances? To say yes to life is not only meaningful under all circumstances – because life itself is – but it is also possible under all circumstances. (p. 123)

And as Egar (2017) has written:

> What happened can never be forgotten and can never be changed. But over time I learned that I can choose how to respond to the past. I can be miserable, or I can be hopeful – I can be depressed, or I can be happy. We always have that choice, that opportunity for control. *I'm here, this is now,* I have learned to tell myself, over and over until the panicky feeling begins to ease. (p. 7).

As a force for peace, justice, and collective action, LETR rests on the acceptance of responsibility by the professional practitioner to research their practice to understand the consequences of what they do: improve their practice in which they are seeking to live values of human flourishing as fully as possible: generate valid accounts of the educational knowledge they generate as contributions to the growth of a global knowledge base for the benefit of all: help others to do so too. Examples of where LET researchers are doing this can be accessed at:

Peace

Arnøy, J. (2025) Appreciating my core values to more fully appreciate others: My living-educational-theory as a peace education researcher-practitioner. *EJOLTs,* 18(1) 32–49. Retrieved from https://web-cdn.org/s/1445/file/node/joakim18-1.pdf

Justice

Sullivan, B, (2006) *A living theory of a practice of social justice: Realising the right of Traveller Children to educational equality.* Republic of Ireland; Limerick University. Retrieved from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/sullivanPhD.pdf

Collective Action through Ubuntu

Charles, E. (2007) *How Can I bring Ubuntu As A Living Standard Of Judgment Into The Academy? Moving Beyond Decolonisation Through Societal Reidentification And Guiltless Recognition.* University of Bath. Retrieved from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/edenphd.shtml

2) **In terms of power, voice, and purpose in moving beyond rhetoric towards meaningful and transformative practice whilst strengthening the collective impact of research on global education theory, policy, and practice.**

Whenever individuals or groups attempt a social change, they are likely to experience the expressions of power by other individuals or groups who are either supporting or opposing the changes. In attempting a social change, it is wise to understand how these expressions of power can affect these attempts so that they can be taken into account.

We use power in Weber's (1978) sense that:

> ‘Power’ (Macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests. (p. 53)

In relation to ‘voice’, by engaging in LETR as continual professional development, practitioners take responsibility for talking on their own behalf rather than hiding behind an anonymous ‘we’. They can bear in mind the importance of Schroyer’s (1973) point about the importance of avoiding using “I” in a way that remains formal and yet pretends that the word contains content in-itself, if one wishes one’s writings to be authentic. Hence, we stress the importance of validation in LETR where the individual subjects their claims to knowledge to a validation group whose purpose is to check and offer ways of strengthening the validity of the knowledge-claims.

In relation to purpose in LETR, this is grounded in the responsibility of the professional educator, to have an educational influence in the learning of not only the people and organisations/social formations they directly have connection with, but also by making accounts of their LETR accessible globally, they contribute to Humanity learning to flourish.

LETR moves beyond rhetoric towards meaningful and transformative practice, whilst strengthening the collective impact of research on global education theory, policy, and practice, by including forms of accountability and validity that focus on explaining educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing. These values include the collective agency of Ubuntu (See Charles, 2007, above).

3) **To explain how the research contributes to breaking down disciplinary boundaries.**

We have explained elsewhere how LETR contributes to breaking down a range of boundaries (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2026a, Whitehead & Huxtable, 2026a, b &c). In relation to disciplinary boundaries, LETR transcends the boundaries of the disciplines approach to Educational Theory. It does this by constituting the theory as the explanations of professional practitioners for their educational influences, in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located, with values of human flourishing, whilst helping others to do so too. A LETR approach draws insights from the disciplines into the explanations of educational influences in learning, whilst avoiding the explanations being subsumed by any discipline, individually or in any combination.

4) **To include the emphasis of global education on “the importance of decolonial, feminist, indigenous, and Global South perspectives, alongside critical examinations of neoliberalism, colonial legacies, and contemporary geopolitical dynamics for research in global education.”**

This inclusion is focused on the insights offered by de Sousa Santos, (2014) in his text on ‘Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide’. Whitehead (2014) has analysed the significance of this text for LETR. Santos’s analysis includes his responses to decolonial, feminist,

indigenous and Global South perspectives alongside his critical examinations of neoliberalism and colonial legacies. Whitehead's analysis includes responses for contemporary geopolitical dynamics for research in global education. The later point is enlarged upon in the following section.

5) **To translate research and evidence into educational action in the communities of practice of the Education, Development and Sustainability Group (EDS) the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group (TERSD) in their Living Educational Theory Research and in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs)**

i) **The Education, Development and Sustainability Group (EDS)**

You can access the living posters of EDS at
https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/eds24.pdf

EDS is neutral (non-religious, non-political) and open for everyone. They work particularly with vulnerable children and youth and economically poor people. EDS is free, with no tuition fees. Learn more about EDS by visiting their website - https://www.edsbd.on

We are hoping that you will access the living-posters of Md Riaz Hawlader at:

https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/riaz221224.pdf

and of Saima Ahmad at:

https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/saima250525.pdf

These posters use visual data to communicate a range of contexts and activities in which EDS works within Bangladesh. The focus on educational action takes account of the immediate practical concerns of a community of practice working with Md Riaz Hawlader and Saima Ahmad (see the living-posters below), within the context of sustained support offered by EDS.



Md Riaz Hawlader

Email: edsstudent20054@gmail.com

Lead interdisciplinary learning: Education for Development and Sustainability (EDS), Bangladesh

Applying Living Educational Theory Research in Interdisciplinary Learning



Why I do what I do: I practice experiential and interdisciplinary learning because I believe in empowerment, social justice, love, and freedom. In Bangladesh, traditional education often lacks love, critical thinking, and opportunities to connect learning across subjects in meaningful, hands-on ways. At EDS, we address these challenges through nature-based and interdisciplinary learning, where students take responsibility for projects like fish farming and vegetable cultivation, integrating skills from science, math, and social studies etc. while fostering teamwork and sustainability. What inspires me is the transformative impact of connecting education to real-life applications through interdisciplinary approaches. At EDS, teachers and students practice values like love, empathy, and trust, actively embedding them into learning. By fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and cross-disciplinary connections, we empower students to bridge societal gaps and build a sustainable, inclusive future. I do what I do because I've witnessed how interdisciplinary learning transforms lives, strengthens communities, and shapes a better world.

Driving values and feelings

The values guiding my work are love, empowerment, democracy, social justice, self-reliance and freedom. I care deeply for my students, which is why I constantly seek ways to support their growth and my own.



Collaborative planning: Students and teachers unite to design interdisciplinary learning experiences.



Tending for a better future: Sowing seed, sharing with others, and nurturing a love for nature.



Teacher introducing an interdisciplinary learning assignment, explaining its connection to real-life applications.





Collaborative learning in action: Students prepare ingredients together, fostering teamwork, responsibility, and shared experiences through hands-on interdisciplinary learning.



Joyful execution: A student enthusiastically implements their plans at the EDS farm school, showcasing teamwork and initiative.



Harvesting success: A fruitful result of students' teamwork and dedication.



Students collaboratively drawing ecosystems and food chains, connecting interdisciplinary knowledge across subjects.







Students collaborate and clarify their plan before planting rice seedlings, turning teamwork into action at the EDS farm school.



Enjoying the fruits of their labor: A sweet reward for teamwork and dedication.



Students conducting a water test to understand environmental sustainability and practical learning.





EDS students cultivating teamwork, nature, and shared responsibility in the rice fields.



Harvest joy: Enjoying the fruits of their hard work and teamwork!



Principal Hilde from a Norwegian school visited EDS to learn about its methods, observing students collaborating while Dr. Hafeez "Ian supervision explained.







Harvesting hard work and hope – EDS students embrace sustainability through hands-on learning.



Immersed in joy: Students embracing nature while learning and growing together.



Principal Hilde from a Norwegian school visited EDS to learn about its methods, observing students collaborating while Dr. Hafeez "Ian supervision explained.





Students engage in experiential and interdisciplinary learning—harvesting fish, preparing meals, and sharing a picnic together—fostering teamwork, love, and real-world connections.



Teamwork in action: EDS students measuring and sharing harvested paddy for their community.



Breaking barriers: Girls embracing freedom, joy, and inclusion in a world of possibilities.



Students presenting their work to Principal Hilde's team (Norway), showcasing their learning and collaboration.





Reflection is the foundation of interdisciplinary learning, fostering deeper connections between subjects and the values that guide our practice, such as love and empathy. The images showcase a research meeting with Professor Jack Whitehead (UK) and Dr. Marie Huxtable, where our team discussed findings, addressed challenging questions, and collaboratively planned next steps. These sessions follow an action research approach—planning, implementing, reflecting, and revising—to continuously improve our methods. By integrating critical insights from our reflections and discussions, we ensure that interdisciplinary learning and value-driven education remain impactful and relevant.

Research passion

I conduct Living Educational Theory Research to improve our interdisciplinary teaching practices. I explore the values I express during my practice. I focus on the values empowerment, love, and social justice to enhance learning and foster positive social changes.

YouTube video of our actions:

EDS: Action research:
EDS holistic approach: Action Research: Empowering Students Through Experiential Learning
EDS Picnic, 2024: Empowering Students Through Experiential Learning

Access homepage of living-posters from https://actionresearch.net/ Previous living-poster



Saima Rahman
Lead Women Empowerment
Education for Development and Sustainability (EDS)

Living Education Theory Researcher and Action researcher, Bangladesh
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My courage
I combine fearless action, curios exploration and love with reflection and peace in nature to find the courage and knowledge within me to pursue my dream.

Why I do what I do: As a girl, I thought my destiny was to marry, get children, become a housewife and look after in laws, like all women around me. My curious, fearless mind and love for play, sports, exploration and experiential learning, are not considered feminine in my culture. So, I've faced harassment and negative social control. At 16, my family halted my education and arranged my engagement. I managed to cancel it, and after a long struggle, with support from Hafizur Rahman PhD, I convinced my parents to let me continue to study.

Realizing that most Bangladeshi girls face similar struggles, cannot be who they are or express what they love, I became a strong advocate for women empowerment. I create trusting, empathic relations with my students and fellow leaders, and an environment based on love, social justice, democracy, freedom and joy. We facilitate for transformative learning where girls start to lead, voice their opinions and engage in all EDS activities. We stop child marriages, and council parents on how education can improve the life of their family. I use the nature and mentor girls for sound physical and mental health, critical thinking and to create a sustainable life for themselves, their family and community.

My dream is to get a PhD, job and independence so I can share my transformative story of resilience to more people and bring hope and change to more girls in my community, Bangladesh and globally.



I will always be a fearless, curious explorer expressing joy and love for learning, people and the nature. Education is the key to freedom. I've volunteered in EDS since 2005. Hafizur Rahman PhD and Trine Lund have always been there for me, helped me regain my strength, joy and love for life and become the leader I am today.



I conduct Living Education Theory Research with my peers to enhance my own and my students' learning about ourselves, each other, our community and nature. Every child and girl has the potential to blossom and develop themselves, their family and community. Together we create a more human world. We plan, act, reflect and learn together. We visit vulnerable families and invite their girls to join EDS and school. During Covid, we called girls to ensure they were safe and continued their studies at home. We stop child marriages, child abuse, child labour and get youth gang leaders and members back to school. We create safety for girls on their way to and from EDS and school. We open EDS branches in remote areas so girls with unsafe school roads get education from EDS.



I encourage our girls to believe they can do anything! As a role model, I actively engage in every part of EDS and motivate our girls to do the same. So now they cultivate our rice and fish farm, grow vegetables, make picnic from their produce and engage in interdiciplinary learning for sustainable development. They teach, conduct science experiments, are active in group work, play and sports.



I love to learn engaging teaching methods so I actively engaged in headmaster Iren Norvals' and teacher Signe Aanby's teacher training in EDS, and I mentor international visitors and educators about our EDS method. I mentor Laiba (13 years old Norwegian student) to volunteer in EDS and I learn Norwegian teaching methods from her.



I create a trusting, empathic relation to my students and facilitate for collaborative learning engaging their senses and feelings. I collaborate with Emanuelle Bjerkem, Head of IB department Sandefjord high school (former Head of IB, Blindern high school), Norway for mutual learning among Norwegian and EDS students. We share our stories of resilience and inspire the Norwegians to realize the value of education and to take positive initiatives in their community. They teach us English and ICT.



I discuss mental health and female leadership with my students and peers. I mentor Laiba. I observe our teaching videos to explore how the values we express influence our students' learning. We discuss our research with Dr. Jack Whitehead and Head editor Marie Huxtable PhD, University of Cumbria, UK.



I'm discussing how to prevent child marriage with Dr. Sabiha Huq, Dr. Tahmina Islam, Hafizur Rahman PhD and Trine Lund



We (EDS Youth leaders, Hafizur Rahman PhD and Trine Lund) conduct Action Research with Dr. Erling Krogh and Dr. Sigrid Gjøtterud, NMBU, Norway



We learn to write research articles



Videos of our action
EDS farm school, 2024
EDS holistic approach: Action Research
EDS Picnic, 2024: Empowering Students Through Experiential Learning

ii) The Indonesian Transformative Educational Research Group (TERSD) in their Living Educational Theory Research

You can access the living-posters of the Indonesian TERSD LETR community of practice at

https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf

In translating research and evidence into educational action in the communities of the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group (TERSD) in their Living Educational Theory Research you will need to access the living-educational-theories of members of the group that have been published.

We are thinking particularly of the papers of Rika Kartikawati and Siti Aminah Alfalathi published below in the Educational Journal of Living Theories.

iii) The Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs)

at http://www.ejolts.net

The following 2026 publications in EJOLTs of Siti Aminah Alfalathi and Rika Kartiwati demonstrate how they have moved into translating research and evidence into educational action in the community of the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group (TERSD), in their living-educational-theories.

Siti Aminah Alfalathi (2026) *"How Do I Improve My Practice as a Lecturer?": A Living Educational Theory Research Study of Supporting Students Empowerment through Attachment Theory. EJOLTs 19(1) 56-71*. Retrieved from https://web-cdn.org/s/1445/file/node/siti19-1.pdf

Rika Kartikawati (2026*) Living My Value: Navigating the Challenges of Practicing Confidentiality in Counselling.* EJOLTS. 19(1) 30-55. Retrieved from https://web-cdn.org/s/1445/file/node/rika19-1.pdf

Interim conclusion on creating and sustaining a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to an Academic Network for Global Education & Learning

The arguments for developing a LETR approach to ANGEL rest on each professional practitioner's acceptance of a responsibility, for living values of human flourishing as fully as possible and helping others to do so too. It rests on researching the educational influences of expressing this responsibility and for making public the explanations of educational influences in learning as a contribution to the global knowledgebase of education and helping others to do so too.

LETR rests on the acceptance, by a professional practitioner, of their responsibility to ask, research and answer questions of the kind, 'How do I enhance my educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which my practice is located, with values of human flourishing, and helping others to do so too?'. The approach requires the practitioner to make public the knowledge they create as they explain these educational influences.

Our optimism is grounded in the expression of a life-affirming energy with values of human flourishing that we experience in the LETR communities we belong to, as we support the aims and purposes of ANGEL. This optimism has an evidence-base in the living-educational-theories that have been generated and shared by participants in LETR communities around the world. We invite you to join our community of Living Educational Theory Researchers in enhancing the educational influence of ANGEL. As a first step you could submit and share your living-poster at https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2025.pdf .

You might then develop this into a submission to the Educational Journal of Living Theories at http://ejolts.net, as a contribution to 'A Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Creating and Sustaining an Academic Networks for Global Education and Learning with Values of Human Flourishing'.

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