

Theories produced by practitioner researchers: contribution to improvement both locally and globally.

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A keynote presentation to the UH-nett Vest¹ workshop, 16.–17. November 2011 at Solstrand, Norway with the theme of 'Research on Teacher Education: Past present, future', in the context of developing an agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education.



A 59:55 minute video of the keynote can be viewed from:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgR5hOWZP_U

I first want to thank the organizers of the conference for the opportunity to contribute to a conversation on developing an agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education. It is always a privilege to share ideas that can enhance professionalism in education in both local and global contexts. All of you here today know more than I do about your local context and I am looking forward very much to sharing your knowledge in tomorrow's workshops.

As a keynote speaker I have been asked to be a resource person in a workshop group and I know that the groups have been asked to focus on:

- 1) The development of good and researchable problems.
- 2) A discussion of the current base of theory, and the implications of the choice of theory in relation to choice of method and analysis.
- 3) A discussion of the methodological approach.

¹ UH-West network is a formal network collaboration among five institutions: the University of Bergen, Bergen University College, College of New Jersey, Volda University College and Stord / Haugesund. The network was established January 1, 2008, and the agreement is valid for five years. Volda University College became a member in April 2009. The network will initially strengthen the research activity at each institution. The individual institutions will still be separate, independent institutions, and develop their own characteristics and advantages. But together they have a clear regional, national and international role in education and research.

As my contribution to a conversation on developing an agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education I shall focus on the improvements both locally and globally of the theories produced by practitioner-researchers in relation to the three points above. I am thinking here of practitioner-researchers who are wanting to both improve practice and contribute to knowledge through enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

1) The development of good and researchable problems

Kari Flornes (2007) in her doctoral study of *An Action Research Approach To Initial Teacher Education In Norway*, emphasized that the most important question for her as a teacher educator was, 'How can I improve my practice?'

Sigrid Gjøtterud (2011) in her doctoral study on *Developing Guiding Encounters in Practical and Didactic Education: Action Research in Teacher Educators' Practice* provided evaluations that showed a considerable problem with relevance in Norwegian teacher education where:

'... the student teachers do not experience a satisfactory connection between the theory which they meet through their studies and the current problems they meet in schools. There is little documentation of how teacher educators work to develop education study programs. The main research question is: How can we further develop the practical and didactic education program² and our competency as teacher educators through pedagogical action research which focuses on guiding?'

I am suggesting that the quality of the developing agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education, depends on the quality of the questions being researched. As Collingwood says:

'Whether a given proposition is true or false, significant or meaningless, depends on what question it was meant to answer; and any one who wishes to know whether a given proposition is true or false, significant or meaningless, must first find out what question it was meant to answer.'
(Collingwood, 1991, p. 39)

There are many kinds of researchable questions and some of these have been outlined in the papers for the workshops at this Conference, such as those from Mirosław Wiacek (HiSF), Angela Hasselgreen (HiB) and Gard Buen Jensen (HiB):

- i. 'How much can the introduction of more informed formative assessment practices increase student achievement in English, as well as their perceptions of their own learning/learning goals?
- ii. How can Norwegian teachers of English best be informed and supported in adopting new FA practices in their classrooms?

² This is a Post Graduate Teachers Education program of 60 credits

- iii. How do teachers perceive FA of the abilities they are hoping to develop in their pupils, and what is their attitude to the practices introduced and the process of trying them out?

The three questions formulated in the introduction can be condensed into the following overarching question: *does in-service training in FA through AR have a positive effect on the following variables?*

In thinking about the development of good and researchable problems in the developing agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education I want to bear in mind the connections with global relationships. For example, Ningxia Teachers University in China has established an Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Teaching (Laidlaw, 2006). The National Research Foundation of South Africa has funded a three-year (2011-14) Transformative Education/al Studies Project (TES, 2010) with the generic question, 'How do I transform my professional practice as...?'

The mission of the American Educational Research Association and the objectives of the British Educational Research Association both focus on improving practice and serving the public good:

'AERA seeks "to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good." (Ball and Tyson, 2011). BERA seeks to encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit' (BERA, 2010).

Ball and Tyson (2011) make the point that educational researchers have fulfilled the first part of the AERA mission to advance knowledge about education and to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education. They say that educational researchers have been less vigilant and less effective, however, in fulfilling the second part of the mission; to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. I am suggesting that the problems being researched by contributors to the workshops at this conference, because they are formed as 'general' problems, will do much to fulfill the first part of the mission to advance knowledge about education and to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education. I am suggesting that the questions being asked and answered by Flornes (2007) and Gjøtterud (2011) with the inclusion of 'I' and 'we', could do much to fulfill both parts of the AERA mission because of their willingness to be both accountable to others in terms of the values they believe are contributing to the public good and in drawing insights from the theories of others into their explanations of improving practice.

In Europe we have the Pestalozzi Programme of the Council of Europe with its 47 member states. I know that participants in this conference have already made significant contributions to this European initiative. I would just like to point to the contribution of Branko Bogнар (Bognar and Zovko, 2008) of Josip Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia, because of his focus on enabling both teachers and pupils to become action researchers in enhancing their own

learning and in generating knowledge. Joseph Huber, the Head of the Council of Europe Pestalozzi Programme has contributed to a publication on *'Teacher education for change: The theory behind the Council of Europe Pestalozzi Programme'* (Huber & Mompoin-Gaillard, 2011). In my review of this publication (Whitehead, 2011b) I have explored the implications of an international teacher's continuing professional development project that integrates the ideas presented in this keynote. I do hope that you will access the review and participate in the project (see the virtual learning space at <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/> And the details of the project at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huhtable/LLCCPD/Home.html>).

Walton (2011a & b), the Director of the Centre for the Child, Family and Society of Liverpool Hope University, has focused on the well-being of children as the focus for good and researchable problems with collaborative inquiry.

In Canada we have Delong (2011 - <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/>) focusing on the development of cultures of inquiry within which practitioner-researchers inquiry into both improving practice and generating knowledge. In the Brantford Master's Cohorts for 2009 and 2012 and the Bluewater Master's Cohort Sections of the web-site you can access the practitioner-researchers' responses to good and researchable questions. These questions include the 'I' of the researcher. The answers include values that carry hope for the future of humanity.

2) A discussion of the current base of theory, and the implications of the choice of theory in relation to choice of method and analysis.

I make a distinction between theories of education or education theories and educational theories. I think of theories of education as being produced by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, historians, economists, theologians, scientists and artists of education as well as management, leadership and administration theorists, amongst others. There are a large number of theories from these sources that are contributing to the current knowledge-base of education.

I think of educational theories as the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live. I usually call such explanations **living educational theories** to distinguish the explanations **created** by individual practitioner-researchers from the explanations **derived** from theories of education (Whitehead, 1989). In the creation of a living theory an individual explains their present practice and influence in terms of an evaluation of the past and an intention to create something better in the future that has yet to be realised in practice.

Insights from different theories of education can be integrated within the creation of living educational theories. It is unusual for the living educational theories of individual practitioner-researchers with their inclusion of 'I', to be

integrated within theories of education. The 'I' of the individual is usually eliminated from the generalisations of theories of education or subsumed within a concept of 'the person'.

I hope that this distinction between theories of education or education theories and living educational theories is clear because it has implications for the choice of theory in relation to choice of method and analysis.

For example, Flornes (2007) shows how the generalizations from education theories can be integrated within the creation of a living educational theory. Flornes includes insights from Personal Construct Psychology and Positive Psychology within three cycles of her action research investigation:

‘Through this Action Research I conclude that the pedagogical tools derived from Personal Construct Psychology and Positive Psychology and implemented in my study serve as appropriate catalysts for improved interactions and relationships between student teachers, mentors and teacher educators. In the process of becoming and being a teacher, and in my research, these catalysts not only promote reflection about personal performance in the classroom, but they seem to stimulate a valued process of self-assessment, in challenging future teachers to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses.’

In discussing the current base of theory I want to emphasize the importance of teacher-researchers as **knowledge-creators in improving practice and generating knowledge**. This requires the recognition and development of our capacities to contribute to the current base of theory by offering, as gifts, our explanations of our educational influence. Many teacher-researchers have made such contributions. They have allowed me to make them freely available through <http://www.actionresearch.net>. I am thinking particularly of the living theory and the master educator's programme sections at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> and

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>

The choice of theory has profound implications in relation to choice of method and analysis. Each discipline of education has its own conceptual framework and method of validation. Education researchers are likely to be making a contribution to knowledge from within the conceptual framework and method of validation of a discipline of education. Educational researchers who are generating their own living educational theories will draw insights from the methods and analyses of disciplines of education without reducing their explanations of educational influence to the conceptual frameworks or methods of validation of any individual discipline of education or of any combination of disciplines.

3) A discussion of the methodological approach.

Teacher-researchers are often faced with a confusing number of methodological approaches when undertaking academic study of education in a University or College. With my doctoral students I usually explain the distinguishing

characteristics and differences between grounded theory, case study, narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, auto-ethnography and living theory methodologies.

Because I focus my supervision of masters and doctoral research programmes from primary, secondary and higher education (see the master educator's programme and living theory sections of <http://www.actionresearch.net>), on the creation of living educational theories I also stress the importance of methodological inventiveness as resting in the creativity of each teacher-researcher:

'The importance of methodological inventiveness

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes." (Dadds & Hart, p. 166, 2001)

If our aim is to create conditions that facilitate methodological inventiveness, we need to ensure as far as possible that our pedagogical approaches match the message that we seek to communicate. More important than adhering to any specific methodological approach, be it that of traditional social science or traditional action research, may be the willingness and courage of practitioners – and those who support them – to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care.' (Dadds & Hart, p. 169, 2001)

If you include the creation of the living educational theories of teacher-researchers in the evolving agenda for Norwegian research into teacher education I think that you will need to recognize the importance of each researcher generating their living theory methodology for themselves. Whilst a living theory methodology is unique to its creator there are some ontological and epistemology assumptions that distinguish such a methodology.

The first assumption is that the individual 'I' in questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' is seeking to live as fully as they can the values that give meaning and purpose to their lives. I believe that such values are carried by a life-affirming energy and that together carry hope for the future of humanity. In placing one's 'I' in an educational enquiry I am thinking of Buber's understanding of 'I', rather than the use of an egotistical 'I' – I would replace 'he' by 'he/she' to overcome a sense of gender bias in the language:

‘How much of a person a man is depends on how strong the I of the basic word I-You is in the human duality of his I.

The way he says I - what he means when he says I - decides where a man belongs and where he goes. The word "I" is the true shibboleth of humanity.

Listen to it!

How dissonant the I of the ego sounds! When it issues from tragic lips, tense with some self-contradiction that they try to hold back, it can move us to great pity. When it issues from chaotic lips that savagely, heedlessly, unconsciously represent contradiction, it can make us shudder. When the lips are vain and smooth, it sounds embarrassing or disgusting.

Those who pronounce the severed I, wallowing in the capital letter, uncover the shame of the world spirit that has been debased to mere spirituality.

But how beautiful and legitimate the vivid and emphatic I of Socrates sounds! It is the I of infinite conversation, and the air of conversation is present on all its ways, even before his judges, even in the final hour in prison. This I lived in that relation to man which is embodied in conversation. It believed in the actuality of men and went out toward them. Thus it stood together with them in actuality and is never severed from it. Even solitude cannot spell forsakenness, and when the human world falls silent for him, he hears his daimonion say You.

How beautiful and legitimate the full I of Goethe sounds! It is the I of pure intercourse with nature. Nature yields to it and speaks ceaselessly with it; she reveals here mysteries to it and yet does not betray her mystery. It believes in her and says to the rose: "So it is You" - and at once shares the same actuality with the rose. Hence, when it returns to itself, the spirit of actuality stays with it; the vision of the sun clings to the blessed eye that recalls its own likeness to the sun, and the friendship of the elements accompanies man into the calm of dying and rebirth.

Thus the "adequate, true, and pure" I-saying of the representatives of association, the Socratic and the Goethean persons, resounds through the ages.’ (Buber, 1970, p. 117).

As practitioners and practitioner-researchers in education I imagine that many of us would include love in ‘I’ in explaining what we are doing in the sense that we have a passion for education as a personal and public good. In explaining our educational influences in learning I doubt if we could produce a valid explanation of our educational influence without using love as an explanatory principle. For example, Gjøtterud (2009) explicitly addresses this value in showing how the notions of love and critique have become an important source for changing practice in guiding student teachers and forming a foundation for her living theory:

Together with my colleagues in the postgraduate teacher-education programme at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences I have been engaged in an action research process concerning the question, 'How can I/we improve my/our practice? We shared stories of guiding experiences in face-to-face encounters, and by reading each others' texts of guidance written when the encounter was online. Individually, and as a group, we reflected upon our own experiences as well as the shared stories and texts. Through these action-reflection cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) the notions of love and critique emerged as expressions of values we considered important, not only in our guiding of the students but also when encountering each other as co-workers.
(<http://ejolts.net/node/127>)

I am also suggesting that each one of us will recognize an experience of existing as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) in the sense that we can sometimes experience the denial of our values in our practice. I mean that we can be aware that our values are not being lived as fully as they could be in what we are doing. This tension, or contradiction serves as a stimulus to our imaginations to work out how we could improve what we are doing. Hence my suggestion that we can include 'I' as a living contradiction in our explanations of educational influence as we seek to improve practice and generate knowledge.

The second assumption is that the practitioner-researcher uses embodied expressions of **values** as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence.

I want to be clear that in focusing on the embodied expression of values, I am including expressions of energy. I am claiming that we cannot do anything without the expression of energy and that the expression of energy with our values needs to be recognized in the explanatory principles we use to explain our educational influences. The relationships between energy and values are not well developed in explanations of educational influence:

'The Energy Paradigm

Conceptions involving energy are very current in psychology, but they have been very poorly worked out from the methodological standpoint. It is not clear to what extent these (p. 63) conceptions are merely models of our understanding and to what extent they can be given ontological status. Equally problematic are the conceptual links between energy and motivation, energy and meaning, energy and value, although it is obvious that in fact there are certain links: we know how 'energetically' a person can act when positively motivated, we know that the meaningfulness of a project lends additional strength to the people engaged in it, but we have very little idea of how to link up into one whole the physiological theory of activation, the psychology of motivation, and the ideas of energy which have been elaborated mainly in the field of physics. ' (Vasilyuk, 1991, pp. 63-64)

I attach great significance to the embodied expression of values as explanatory principles. I am thinking of values as ontological in the sense that they give

meaning and purpose to our lives as educators and educational researchers. I am thinking of what really matters to you and I in our expressions of love, hope, compassion, care, justice, freedom and respect as well as a procedural value of democracy. I know that each one of us will have our own unique constellation of values that help to constitute who we are. In supervising many masters and doctoral degree programmes I have experienced the meanings of the values being both clarified and evolving into living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) in the course of their emergence in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' You can see how individual practitioner-researchers have clarified and evolved the meanings of their values through the Titles and Abstracts of their living theories at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>. Each living theorist uses the explanatory power of their values as both explanatory principles and as the living standards of judgments for evaluating the validity of the contributions to knowledge.

To emphasize the importance of the embodied expression of values in generating appropriate explanatory principles of educational influence I shall focus on Sigrid Gjøtterud, Hilde Hiim and myself in a conversation about energy, values and supervision at Aakershus University College Norway on the 3rd February 2010. Hilde Hiim was a supervisor of Sigrid Gjøtterud's successfully completed doctoral research programme.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyE03XxyiVY> (1:52 minutes)

As I move the cursor backwards and forwards along the clip, I shall bear witness to those experiences of empathetic resonance where I can feel, see and experience the flow of the energy-flowing values that form explanatory principles of educational influence (Huxtable, 2009). For example, at 1:48 minutes into the above clip, Hilde shares her sense of fun, energy and pleasure with Sigrid in the supervision relationship. In moving the cursor backwards and forwards and pausing at my experience of greatest empathetic resonance with the expressions life-affirming energy and pleasure, I am claiming that no valid explanation of educational influence in this relationship could omit the expressions of such energy-flowing values.

I may be mistaken in thinking that most doctoral theses in Norwegian Universities will be text-based in the sense of being mainly constituted by words on pages of text. The acceptance of multimedia representations is a recent innovation in many UK Universities. It was only in 2004 that the regulations governing the submission of research degrees were changed to permit the submission of visual data in digital form.

Because of the significance of practitioner-researchers in contributing their embodied knowledge to the knowledge-based of education, I am suggesting that the agenda for Norwegian research into teacher education should include the use of visual data in multimedia narratives. I am thinking here of the narratives that include the clarification and communication of the meanings of the energy-flowing values that educators express in both their professional practice and knowledge-creation (Whitehead, 2010 a&b, 2011b; EJOLTS, 2011).

I want to make clear why I suggest that multimedia narratives are needed to communicate the relationally dynamic qualities of energy-flowing values. Fig 3 below, is a diagrammatical representation by Rayner of an activity system that is used as a unit of appraisal in Activity Theory. The unit of appraisal of the video-clip of Hilde, Sigrid and myself is that of the individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. Compare the two representations in terms of their capacities to offer a valid explanation of an individual's educational influence. My own judgment is that the flow of energy with values shown in the visual data cannot be adequately communicated through the diagrams that 'cut space' in Activity Theory.

I am using 'social formation' in the way used by Bourdieu:

'Thus, paradoxically, social science makes greatest use of the language of rules precisely in the cases where it is most totally inadequate, that is, in analysing social formations in which, because of the constancy of the objective conditions over time, rules have a particularly small part to play in the determination of practices, which is largely entrusted to the automatisms of the *habitus*.' (Bourdieu, p. 145, 1990)

My main point is that a multimedia narrative enables meanings of words and the expression of embodied meanings in practice to be used together in explanations of educational influence. I hope that my stress on the importance of visual data resonates with tomorrow's presentation on *Visual literacy and the competence to act* by Hege Gjerde og Hilde Aga Ulvestad (HSF). I am thinking particularly of their point that:

'And most of the information we receive about the world we live in, either fictional or factual, comes to us in visual form. One can here refer to the dreadful terrorist-attack in Norway, where the entire country got the news and the information about the events that took place through different visual media. The need to have skills to critically be able to evaluate, analyze and to understand what you see is crucial.'

In seeing practitioner-researchers as educational knowledge-creators I recognise the importance of holding ourselves and each other to account for living the values that carry hope for the future of humanity as fully as possible. The special issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS - <http://ejolts.net/>) to be published in November 2011 with Crotty's (2011) foreword, focuses on the living theories of practitioner-researchers who are using multimedia narratives

to communicate the meanings of their values in their explanations of educational influence.

The third assumption that distinguishes a living theory methodology is that insights from the most advanced social and other theories of the day are integrated within the explanations emerging from the enquiry as living educational theories.

Since my initial teacher education course in 1966-67 I have been influenced by many theories in the course of creating my own living educational theories. Whilst they are too numerous to describe here I have acknowledged their influence elsewhere (Whitehead, 1993, 1999 & Whitehead & Rayner, 2006). They include insights from philosophical, sociological, psychological, historical, economic, theological, leadership, management, art, science and education theories as well as insights on scientific methodology from my first degree in physical sciences. Whilst acknowledging the influence of these insights I want to stress that none of these insights, either individually or collectively can replace my explanation of my educational influence as a valid explanation of this influence. I do want to be clear about this point. Its significance for me goes back to my initiation into the disciplines approach to educational theory during 1968-70 where my tutors in the philosophy of education held that the practical principles I used to explain my educational influence were at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice and that in any rationally developed theory **would be replaced** by theories with a more theoretical justification (Hirst, 1983, p.18).

To give two examples from many, of the integration of insights from the work of other theorists in my own living educational theory I note the influence of the ideas of Erich Fromm and Jurgen Habermas, two critical theorists. Having read Fromm's *Man for Himself* (1947) and *The Fear of Freedom* (1960) during my initial teacher education programme 1966-7, two ideas continue to influence me. The first is his point that if a person can face the truth without panic they will realise that there is no purpose to life other than that which they create for themselves through their loving relationships and productive work. The second concerns the productive and marketing personalities. The idea that the marketing personality conforms to the principles of economic rationality with its pressures towards de-valuation and de-moralisation continues to motivate me to focus on becoming a productive personality who uses his reason and unites with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work. Fromm's analysis of the pressures of the economic rationality of capitalism continues to inform my work.

From the work of Jurgen Habermas I continue to be influenced by three ideas. The first concerns the four criteria of social validity Habermas (1976, pp 2-3) believes that we use in reaching an understanding with each other. I use his four criteria in establishing validation groups of between 3-8 people to help to strengthen the validity of the explanations of practitioner-researchers. By this I mean that validation groups are asked to help to strengthen the comprehensibility; the evidence used to justify assertions and claims to knowledge; the awareness of the normative background that is influencing the

explanations; the authenticity of the practitioner-researcher in showing that they are living their espoused values as fully as possible. The second is his focus on learning (1987) where he says:

‘A theory developed in this way can no longer start by examining concrete ideals immanent in traditional forms of life. It must orient itself to the range of learning processes that is opened up at a given time by a historically attained level of learning. It must refrain from critically evaluating and normatively ordering totalities, forms of life and cultures, and life-contexts and epochs as a whole. And yet it can take up some of the intentions for which the interdisciplinary research program of earlier critical theory remains instructive.....Coming at the end of a complicated study of the main features of a theory of communicative action, this suggestion cannot count even as a “promissory note.” It is less a promise than a conjecture.’ (Habermas, 1987, p. 383).

The third idea from Habermas is his focus on what could be called the value of living citizenship (Coombs and Potts, 2011) where Habermas (2002) says:

‘The private autonomy of equally entitled citizens can only be secured only insofar as citizens activity exercise their civic autonomy.’ (p.264)

It may be that these three ideas from the work of Habermas could be useful in enhancing research into teacher professionalism. I recently reviewed a paper on the use of ‘Activity Theory’ in research on teacher education. I hope that some of the points below from Rayner on ‘space cannot be cut’, serve to emphasize the importance of using appropriate forms of representation in the communication of relationally dynamic explanations of educational influences. Anyone who has taught a class of children or students will I believe recognize such a relationally dynamic awareness in being open, caring and receptively responsive to the diverse life experiences and relationships in a classroom. Rayner has termed this awareness, natural inclusion. The following video-clip shows Rayner’s demonstration of a relationally dynamic awareness that transformed my own perceptions through the experience of this awareness (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).



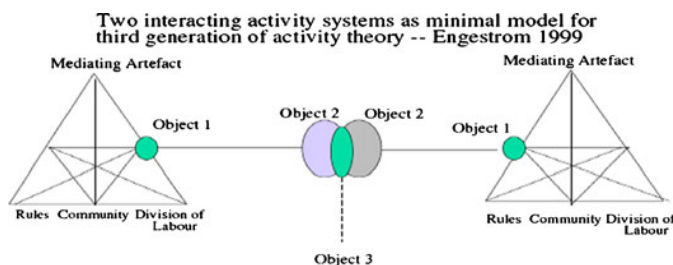
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVa7FUIA3W8>

This awareness had implications for any researcher influenced by ‘Activity Theory’ with its tendency to represent ideas with linear boundaries such as the diagram below. Rayner’s analysis of the damage that can be done to a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries by representations that

appear to ‘cut space’, focus on his understanding that ‘space cannot be cut ‘ (Rayner 2011):

‘The potentially restrictive influence of hard line logic on innovative as well as conventional thought can be seen in the depiction of the third generation activity theory model proposed by Engeström in Fig. 3. Definitive methods of visualization have the effect of cutting off the inside of what is perceived as an ‘object’ from its outside, within a fixed frame of space and time. This problem is also evident in the work of Elstrup (2009, 2010). Elstrup recognizes the vital importance of changeable spatial context in shaping the behaviour of organisms (including behaviour of the kind shown in Fig. 2) as a source of ‘intentionality’. However, he still dislocates the discrete boundary of the organism from the transforming boundary of its environment in much the same way that Einstein’s space-excising treatment of gravitation (cf. his description of ‘boxes of space’, above) dislocates—whilst embedding—the movement of discrete material bodies from the curvature of spacetime in an oppositional dialectic of each telling the other what to do.

Hard-line logic renders every figure completely discontinuous from the contextual space that it manifests from and within. The number, 1, becomes a lone figure—all one—an independent singleness, a complete ‘whole unit’, ‘object’ or ‘oneness’ without neighbourhood. ‘I’, as an individual self-identity, is set narcissistically apart from its environment, which it must command or obey if it is not to succumb in the struggle for its own existence. The ‘environment’, what Einstein declared to be ‘everything that isn’t me’, becomes viewed one-sidedly as a source of threat and promise to be adapted to, not the very ground from which the self manifests and into which the self returns. Nothing appears more of a threat in this abstract environment than ‘nothingness’—the receptive transparency and darkness of the void that seems ever-ready, in the guise of ‘death’, to dissolve the illusion of independent existence upon which the self stands on its own two feet. Everything possible is done to defer this ultimate fate, by walling the self away from its origins and destiny. Maintaining order against the forces of uncertainty—Hamlet’s ‘sea of troubles’—becomes the order of the day.



The third generation of activity theory as proposed by Engeström intends to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogues, multiple perspectives, and networks of interacting activity systems.

Fig. 3 Engeström’s third generation activity theory model ‘ (Rayner, 2011, p. 171)

Concluding Reflections

In terms of the development of good and researchable problems I have stressed the importance of bringing the present, embodied knowledge of teacher-researchers together with its evolution in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' into the Academy as contributions to the knowledge-base of education.

In terms of a discussion of the current base of theory, and the implications of the choice of theory in relation to choice of method and analysis I have emphasized the importance of seeing teacher-researchers as knowledge-creators who are generating their own living educational theories as explanations of their educational influence. The analyses or explanations of educational influence can draw insights from a range of theoretical perspectives and methods in different disciplines.

In relation to a discussion of the methodological approach I have stressed the importance of methodological inventiveness as each individual exercises their own creativity in generating their own living theory methodology in their explanation of educational influence. I shall finish by drawing your attention once again to accessing the living theories of practitioner-researchers around the world who have offered freely their explanations as gifts for others to use. You can access these from <http://www.actionresearch.net> and I have included some of the links to appropriate web-sites in the Appendix from the other homepages section of actionresearch.net . I am hopeful that we will sustain an educational conversation over many years to come and you can access four e-forums in the What's New section of <http://www.actionresearch.net> that could support our on-going conversations.

I am looking forward to being able to share in the future many of your explanations of educational influence as you evolve the agenda for Norwegian research into teacher education. Once again, my thanks for the privilege of sharing my ideas with you and I am looking forward to tomorrow's workshops where we can share the ideas from your research and help each other to enhance our educational influences with those we teach and with whom we learn.

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Appendix and Notes

Here are some details of individual, group and networking activities that you might find useful and want to share ideas with. These include: the Action Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association; The Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN); The Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA); The Action Research Africa Network (see the What's New section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>) and the Practitioner-Researcher Network (participate in the conversations in this Network from the What's New section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>).

1) The Transformative Education/al Studies Project (South Africa).

Here are details of the successful proposal for funding:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/southafrica/TESproposalopt.pdf>

In this project, educators/postgraduate students in Higher Education will reflect critically on their learning, teaching, assessment, curriculum and/or educational professional practice in a variety of ways with the multiple benefits of improving the quality of their practice, earning the award of a senior degree and earning research outputs in the form of publications. This will simultaneously impact positively on the quality and rate of under and post graduate throughput and research outputs.....

The overarching research question, which when applied idiosyncratically yields a broad spectrum of insights and outcomes, is:

"How do I transform my educational practice as ?" This research question can be applied in the individual's direct educational context, with innumerable responses and insights....

The proposal submitted by Kathleen Pithouse Morgan for a symposium at AERA 2012 in Vancouver on the Transformative Education/al Studies Project has been accepted. Here are some details of the symposium:

Symposium Title: "Starting With Ourselves": Perspectives from the Transformative Education/al Studies Project:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/southafrica/TEAERA2012prop.pdf>

2) The proposal submitted by Susan Noffke for a symposium at AERA 2012 in Vancouver on action research has also been accepted:

Symposium Title: "To Know is Not Enough": Action Research as the Core of Educational Research:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera2012/aerasym2012noffke.pdf>

3) **Ian Phillips has submitted his Doctoral Thesis for examination:** *My Emergent African Great Story: 'Living I' as naturally including neighbourhood, embodying an audacious Valuing Social Living Pedagogy and imagining the universe luminously, as an energetic inclusion of darkness throughout light and light in darkness:*

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/phillips.shtml>

Ian shows how an individual researcher can research their own learning from an African perspective and create their own living methodology, grounded in their methodological inventiveness, as they create their own living theory as an explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they live and work.

4) **5X5X5 = Creativity** is an arts based action research organization that is focused on supporting children in their exploration and expression of ideas, helping them develop creative skills for life - see <http://www.5x5x5creativity.org.uk/>. I think that you will be particularly impressed with the focus on 'Researching Children Researching Their World'.

5) **Living Values, Improving Practice Cooperatively** – An International Action Research Continuing Professional Development Project. See <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/LLCCPD/Home.html>

and

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

If you visit the 'other homepages of interest' section of <http://www.actionresearch.net> you will have access to many web-sites including the following:

[MARGARET FARREN'S HOMEPAGE AT DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY](#)

[MOIRA LAIDLAW'S HOMEPAGE](#)

[MARIE HUXTABLE'S HOMEPAGE](#)

[JACQUELINE DELONG'S HOMEPAGE: ACTION RESEARCH CANADA](#)

[SONIA HUTCHISON'S HOMEPAGE - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF A CARE NETWORK](#)

[JEAN MCNIFF'S HOMEPAGE](#)

[5X5X5 = CREATIVITY - AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT](#)

[Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan's Ph.D. 'Learning Through Teaching: A Narrative Self-Study Of A Novice Teacher Educator'. University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, 2007](#)

[**ACTION LEARNING ACTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION- ALARA**](#)

[**ACTION RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CHAIRED BY MARGARET RIEL**](#)

[Examples of transformative narratives of action researchers](#)

[To participate in discussion of how to do or support action research](#)

[To join with researchers interested in action research as a topic](#)

[To use learning circles \(a structure for collaboration\) with action research](#)

[**CARN - THE COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK**](#)

[**THE ACTION RESEARCH UNIT AT NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY. Director - LESLEY WOOD**](#)

[**INQUIRY IN EDUCATION - a peer reviewed on-line Journal of The Center For Practitioner Research of the National College of Education at National-Louis University**](#)

[**STEPHEN BIGGER, WRITINGS**](#)

[**SUE ATTARD'S ED.D. DISSERTATION, 'Listening to Voices of Children and Learning with Them: Action Research in a Primary School', University of Herfordshire, UK.**](#)

[**DIANE ALLEN'S MASTER'S DISSERTATION, 'Contributing to learning to change: developing an action learning peer support group of professionals to investigate ways of improving their own professional practice', University of Wollongong, Australia.**](#)

[**Jacqueline Delong's paper for presentation at AERA 2010 in Denver, Colorado, 'Engaging Educators in Representing Their Knowledge in Complex Ecologies and Cultures of Inquiry'**](#)

[**THE FUTURE EDUCATION WITH ALANA JAMES**](#)

[**PAUL ROBERT'S HOMEPAGE ON LIVING AND WORKING IN MEXICO**](#)

[**PIP'S AND BRUCE'S WEBSITE**](#)

[**ACTION RESEARCH AND RELATED RESOURCES AT SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY WITH BOB DICK**](#)

[**LIVING ACTION RESEARCH: JE KAN ADLER-COLLINS**](#)

LIVING LEARNING - a creative space supported by Marie Huxtable

ACTION RESEARCH IN CHINA WITH MOIRA LAIDLAW

ROBYN POUND'S ACTION RESEARCH HOMEPAGE FOR HEALTH VISITORS

RAM PUNIA's HOME PAGE WITH ED.D. AND WRITINGS

ALAN RAYNER'S HOMEPAGE

PRACTICAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL VISUAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS EVERYWHERE (DIVERSE) 28-30 June 2011 at Dublin City University. Director - Yvonne Crotty.