Expanding the frontiers of ARNA through Living Educational Theory Research

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The aim is to present an evidence and values-based explanation of how to expand the frontiers of ARNA using Living Educational Theory Research with values of recognition as human beings and participation as global citizens.

The methodology of the research emerges in the process of producing valid explanations of educational influences in learning. It includes insights from the methodologies of action research, self-study, community-based educational research and autoethnography. The theoretical framework is that of Living Educational Theory Research. This draws insights from the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education together with distinctions between knowledge-inquiry - with knowledge democracy and knowledge mobilisation - and wisdom inquiry (Maxwell, 2021) and the concept of Epistemicide from Santos (2016). As well as using action research methods, the method of empathetic resonance, with digital visual data, is used to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied values that are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence in expanding the frontiers of ARNA.

The progress made involves evidence-based explanations of expanding the frontiers of the Action Research Network of the Americas, through contributions to **Educational** Action Research Networks. The contributions focus on the qualities of 'recognition' and 'participation' in distinguishing what counts as 'educational' in contributing to learning how to enhance the global flows of values of human flourishing in international development.

The findings include Briganti's (2020) doctoral research on her living-theory of international development:

> My thesis is focused on the relationally dynamic values of empathy, social and gender justice, outrage, responsibility, love for and faith in humanity and dignity. The originality lies in their use as explanatory principles in my explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that affect my practice as a development professional.

The findings include program changes through including a life-skills curriculum within an Indian Curriculum, supported by Rawal's Living Educational Theory Research. They include community action changes documented in an analysis of a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Community Based Educational Research (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2022). They include perspective changes in the inquiry, 'How do I improve my professional practice in living values of human flourishing?' These changes are focused on the inclusion

of the values of 'recognition' and 'participation' as explanatory principles in explanations of expanding the frontiers of the Action Research Network of the Americas.

Fulfilling the aim. I shall fulfil the aim by presenting an evidence and values-based explanation of how to expand the frontiers of ARNA using Living Educational Theory Research with values of recognition as human beings. The values include those of human flourishing and the participation as global citizens. Expanding the frontiers includes recognising the importance of insights from knowledge-inquiries such as those by Rowell and Feldman (2019) on knowledge democracy and knowledge mobilisation (Rowell, 2017). It includes insights from recent reports by UNESCO (2022) such as on shifting architectures of knowledge through community university engagement.

For example, the idea of shifting architectures of knowledge owes much to the writings of Michel Foucault. In using these ideas, I think that it is important to understanding that Foucault believed that there is a battle around truth. By truth Foucault is clear that does not mean, "the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted. By truth Foucault means "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true". For Foucault this is a matter not of a battle "on behalf" of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. Foucault says that what must now be taken into account in the intellectual is not the "bearer of universal values." Rather, it's the person occupying a specific position – but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth. The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that regime of truth which is so essential to the (73) structure and functioning of our society. (Rabinow, 1991, 72-74).

The perspectives in the recent report from UNESCO (2022a) on 'Knowledge-drive actions: transforming higher education for global sustainable,' are consistent with such a general level of a regime of truth. This can be seen in the 16 recommendations at the end of the report (pp. 85-87). Similar perspectives are used to structure the UNESCO (2022b) presentation on 'Contributing to shifting architectures of knowledge through community university engagement and the future of higher education.' One of the key messages of the report is that engaged scholarship requires academics to become reflexive and grounding their practice in life enhancing work.

I am suggesting that contributions to shifting architectures must go beyond the rhetoric of researchers into shared valid, values and evidence- based explanations of educational influences in learning in life enhancing work. I agree with Bakhtin (Morson & Emerson, 1989) problems derived from the fundamental error of "rationalist" philosophy are focused on the fatal flaw of the denial of responsibility. For Bakhtin the problem It can be overcome only by an understanding of the act as a category into which cognition enters but which is radically singular and "responsible". (Morson & Emerson, 1989, p. 13.)

I am claiming that what is needed, to enhance the flow of values of human flourishing, is an individual and collective response to questions of the kind, 'how do I improve what I am doing with values of human flourishing?' What is needed is for each one of us to express our educational responsibility to research our own educational practice within our communities

and to share the knowledge we generate in enhancing the flow of values of human flourishing (Whitehead, 2022).

I am making a similar point about the perspectives on knowledge democracy and action research offered by Rowell and Feldman (2019) and on knowledge mobilisation offered by Rowell (2017). The valuable insights are made from within conceptual forms of understanding. For example:

> Overall, knowledge democracy is a perspective on how knowledge is produced and disseminated as well as a stance taken in opposition to what Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo (2003) described as 'intellectual colonialism' (p. 35) and De Sousa Santos (2007) as 'epistemicide'. Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall, both active for 40+ years with advocating for and developing initiatives supporting democratizing knowledge, point out that three phenomena intersect in knowledge democracy: (1) acceptance of multiple epistemolo- gies, (2) affirmation that knowledge is created and represented in multiple forms (e.g. text, image, numbers, story, music, drama, poetry, ceremony, etc.), and (3) understand- ing that knowledge is a tool for taking action to create a more socially just and healthy world and for deepening democracy (Hall and Tandon 2015, n.p.). (Rowell & Feldman, 2019, p. 1)

Rowell has offered insights on knowledge mobilization and action research in global contexts:

> We should harbor no illusions regarding how challenging this work will be. In communicative and research dissemination spaces in which KMb has been expropriated by evidence-based ideologues swirling around in the grasp of a narrow orientation toward knowledge, action research faces a determined opposition. Here, perhaps our strategic focus can turn more intentionally to the development of an alternative knowledge mobilization aligned with knowledge democracy (Hall and Tandon 2017). Toward this end, an upcoming special issue of EARJ will address knowledge democracy and the overall challenge of engaging in action research and participatory action research that stays rooted in the larger emancipatory and egalitarian project of decolonizing research in general and making sure that our efforts serve the interests of the marginalized and disempowered (Kapoor and Jordan 2009; Rowell and Hong 2017). For now, addressing more directly a comparative and cross-cultural perspective on knowledge mobilization may help us to sharpen our critique of the current dominant system of knowledge production, to raise our own consciousness regarding how we engage in research that has an impact and adds value, and to strengthen our capacity to practice forms of action research that can be brought in a clear and forthright manner into the public discourse of policy-making and social justice. (Rowell, 2017, p. 335)

Stressing the importance for educational action researchers of accepting the responsibility of placing their own 'I's in their inquiries, Wood et al. (2017) write:

> We think that action researchers must ask themselves critical questions regarding how their practices promote or constrain the democratization of knowledge. Such

questions force action researchers to accept responsibility for placing the 'I' at the heart of their enquiries and holding themselves to account for living their values as fully as possible. As academic researchers we three authors have all written extensively about action research, have presented many workshops and worked with numerous students to promote a critical understanding of AR in both the global north and south. Still, we see published many examples of watered-down, technically oriented studies which masquerade as action research but are really no more than traditional objective forms of research conducted on people, rather than in authentic partnership. The question at the heart of this paper is, 'How can we, as action researchers, work with participants in ways that are contextually and culturally relevant, and generate knowledge that enables people to take control of improving their own lives as they see fit?' Our use of 'we' in the question stresses the importance of working and researching together, whilst protecting the integrity of each individual 'I'. We are researching together to enhance the influence of our enquiries in contributing to making the world a better place to be, with values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. We are doing this with a focus on contributing to knowledge-democracy from a global perspective, and it is for this reason that we agreed to convene and coordinate global participatory workshops prior to the first Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy, held in Cartagena, Columbia in June 2017 (Wood, et al. 2017, p. 8.).

The methodology of the research emerges in the process of producing valid explanations of educational influences in learning. It can include insights from methodologies that include action research, self-study, narrative inquiry, community-based educational research and autoethnography (Whitehead, 2008, 2016). Rather than choosing a methodology, at the beginning of the research, that is applied to an inquiry, a Living Educational Theory Researcher recognises that they will be generating their own unique living-educational-theory methodology as they explore the implications of asking, researching and answering their question, 'How do I improve my professional practice with values of human flourishing?. As they explore these implications they generate and share a valid, evidence and values-based explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their practice is located. What contributes to the uniqueness of each living-educational-theory methodology is the unique constellation of values that each individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their lives in education and that form the explanatory principles in their explanations of educational influences in learning.

The theoretical framework is that of Living Educational Theory Research. This draws insights from the philosophy, psychology, sociology history of education and other forms and fields of knowledge of education together with distinctions between knowledge-inquiry - with knowledge democracy and knowledge mobilisation - and wisdom inquiry (Maxwell, 2021) and the concept of Epistemicide from Santos (2016). Whilst there are a number of characteristics that can define Living Educational Theory Research methodology it is important to understand that the individual researcher generates their own living-educational-theory research methodology in the course of generating a valid, values and evidence-based explanation of educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located.

I want to be very clear about this point to avoid the misunderstanding that, as with other methodologies (Whitehead, 2018), a methodology, such as autoethnography, action research or narrative inquiry, is applied in the research. In Living Educational Theory Research the living-educational-theory research methodology is generated, rather than applied. The uniqueness of each living-educational-theory research methodology is due to the unique constellation that each researcher uses to generate valid, values and evidence-based explanations of 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.

I want to be clear about this characteristic of a living-educational-theory research methodology and to distinguish this methodology of Living Educational Theory Research Methodology. A Living Educational Theory Research Methodology is distinguished by a living-educational-theory research methodology that emerges in the course of exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice in education with values of human flourishing?'. Such explorations include the generation of a valid, values and evidence-based explanation of educational influence in the learning of the individual, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located.

I also recognise that a living-educational-theory framework can draw insights from a range of other theoretical frameworks without being subsumed within any of them. I have documented my own engagement with a wide range of these other theoretical frameworks in my writings (Whitehead 1967-2022)

Methods

As well as using action research methods (see - https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arlivingtheoryplanner.pdf), the method of empathetic resonance (Whitehead, 2019, pp. 10-11) with digital visual data, is used to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied values that are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence in expanding the frontiers of ARNA. Other methods include the creation and sharing of living-posters (see - https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf). Do please follow the guidelines and submit your living-posters if you haven't already done so.

Because of early criticisms of Living Educational Theory Research that the 'I' in the research question made the explanations of educational influence merely subject or anecdotal, methods of validation were developed to overcome this criticism. These methods were based on Popper's (1975, p. 44) insight that objectivity could be enhanced through intersubjective criticism and the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. Validation groups of between 3-8 peers are often used to strengthen the validity of explanations of educational influence in learning. This involves subjecting an explanation to the following 4 questions in a validation group:

How can I strengthen the comprehensibility of my explanation of educational influence?
How can I improve the evidence I use to justify my explanation of educational influence?

How can I deepen and extend understanding of sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my explanations of educational influence?

How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation of educational influence through showing that I am living my values as fully as possible?

These questions are related to the four criteria of social validity that Habermas (1976, pp. 2-3) claims that we use in reaching an understanding with each other.

Findings

How do the findings justify a claim to be contributing to the expansion of the frontiers of ARNA through Living Educational Theory Research?

I am relating my findings to the four questions Budd Hall (2015) asked of himself at the end of his keynote to the 2015 Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) Conference in Toronto:

> 1. How do I 'decolonize', 'deracialise,' demasculanise and degender my inherited 'intellectual spaces?'
>
> 2. How do I support the opening up of spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic, and that have exercised dominance over (perhaps have even suffocated) intellectual and scholarly thought and writing?
>
> 3. How do I contribute to the building of new academic cultures and, more widely, new inclusive institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity – whether class, gender, national, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, epistemological or methodological in nature?
>
> 4. How do I become a part of creating the new architecture of knowledge that allows co- construction of knowledge between intellectuals in academia and intellectuals located in community settings?   (Hall, 2015, p.12)

Budd Hall is a Co-Holder of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

I want to relate Hall's questions to Foucault's distinction around the battle for 'truth' before focusing on the importance of researching 'I' questions in expanding the frontiers of ARNA through Living Educational Theory Research:

> It seems to me that what must now be taken into account in the intellectual is not the "bearer of universal values." Rather, it's the person occupying a specific position – but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth… There is a battle "for truth," or at least "around truth"- it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean "the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted," but rather "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true,"

> it being understood also that it's a matter not of a battle "on behalf" of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. (Rabinow, 1991, pp. 73-74).

In contributing to expanding the frontiers of ARNA through Living Educational Theory Research my findings focus on the necessity of researching 'I' questions and sharing valid, evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning. For example, the findings include Briganti's (2021) doctoral research on her living-theory of international development:

> My thesis is focused on the relationally dynamic values of empathy, social and gender justice, outrage, responsibility, love for and faith in humanity and dignity. The originality lies in their use as explanatory principles in my explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that affect my practice as a development professional. (Abstract)

The findings include program changes through including a life-skills curriculum within an Indian Curriculum, supported by Rawal's (2020) Living Educational Theory Research. They include community action changes documented in an analysis of a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Community Based Educational Research (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2022). They include perspective changes in the inquiry, 'How do I improve my professional practice in living values of human flourishing?' These changes are focused on the inclusion of the values of 'responsibility, 'equity', 'recognition' and 'participation' as explanatory principles in explanations of expanding the frontiers of the Action Research Network of the Americas (Delong, et al. 2021 and 2022).

The importance of these findings, focused on including researching 'I' questions in expanding the frontiers of ARNA through Living Educational Theory Research, involves a transformation in the questions being researched by ARNA researchers to avoid the intellectualist legend described by Ryle:

> The crucial objection to the intellectualist legend is this. The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid. But if, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle." (Ryle, p. 31, 1973)

The contributions of Living Educational Theory Research to expanding the frontiers of ARNA are focused on the recognition of the importance of going beyond insights from propositional understandings into explorations of questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice in education with values of human flourishing?' with valid, values and evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning. Such explanations expand the frontiers of ARNA through including ARNA researchers in a global movement of Living Educational Theory Research with values of human flourishing.

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