

## **Using Living Educational Theory Research to Address Inequities Through Professional Learning and Education: Amplifying marginalised voices in contemporary times.**

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Presented at the International Professional Development Association Conference on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021, with the theme, ‘Marginalised voices in contemporary times: addressing inequities through professional learning and education.’

### **Abstract**

This presentation provides evidence to support using Living Educational Theory Research to address inequities in education through professional learning and to amplifying marginalised voices in contemporary times.

Living Educational Theory Research is grounded in a professional’s continuing professional development in exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering the question, ‘How do I improve my professional practice?’. The implications include generating and sharing, valid, evidence-based explanations of educational influences in one’s own continuing professional learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located. Evidence is provided to show how the living-educational-theories of practitioner-researchers in their continuing professional development, are addressing inequities in education and amplifying marginalised voices, including those of ourselves. The organisation of the presentation follows of IPDA guidance for the proposals of focus, originality and the significance to the conference strand on the role of human experiences, identities, and culture in professional learning and practitioner education.

**Focus** – The marginalised voices are those of practitioner-researchers and their pupils and students who find that their national educational research associations, such as the American and British Educational Research Association, prioritise the publications of education research rather than educational research. This distinction is central to the presentation:

Education research is research carried out within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validity of forms and fields of education research such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, politics, economics and management of education.

Educational research is research that generates valid, evidence-based explanations for the educational influences in the continuing professional learning of the teacher-researcher, other practitioner-researcher, pupils and students and in the social formations in which the practice is located.

The amplification of these marginalised voices including my own is focused on addressing, clarifying and making public the paradigmatic meaning of Living Educational Theory Research in terms of the living-educational-theories of individual practitioner-researchers. As stated above, and bears repeating, a living-educational-theory is an individual’s explanation 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.

Whilst having to contend with the pressures to conform to the structures of the disciplines of education when needing to overcome these pressures in creating and sharing a living-

educational-theory, I want to focus on the following self-criticism of my own influence in marginalisation voices that could contribute to enhancing the systemic influence of Living Educational Theory Research in improving practice and contributing knowledge on spreading values of human flourishing. I am assuming that this systemic influence depends on enhancing cultural influences that can serve to spread Living Educational Theory Research. I follow Said's (1993, pp. xii-xiv) idea of culture as a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought. The basis of the elevating element in Living Educational Theory Research is that it includes an educational responsibility to live values of human flourishing as fully as possible. I repeat this point below, when considering the significance of the research, as I believe it to be fundamental in amplifying marginalised voices that are seeking to enhance the flow of values of human flourishing.

## **Originality**

The originality of this research is in establishing the academic legitimacy of the idea that individual professional can generating and share their valid, 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, as they explore the implications of asking, researching and answering, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'

The originality is focused on the inclusion of 'I' as a living contradiction in the explanation of educational influence and on the use of an individual's unique constellation of values as explanatory principles in the explanation of educational influence in professional learning in exploring the implications for professional learning of asking, researching and answering the question, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. The originality of embracing 'I' as a living contradiction in the question, 'How do I improve my professional practice', can be experienced whenever the values one is committed to are experienced as being negated in practice. I first experienced this myself in 1972, as a science teacher, on viewing a video of a science classroom in which I believed I had established enquiry learning. The video showed that I was giving the pupils the questions, rather than eliciting the questions from the pupils. On experiencing myself as a living contradiction my imagination immediately began to offer possibilities for improving my practice. I was motivated to act on one of the possibilities because of the motivating energy associated with living my values as fully as possible.

The originality of a living-educational-theory is also focused on the unique constellation of values a practitioner-researcher uses to both improve their practice and to form the explanatory principles for why they are doing what they are doing, in an explanation of their educational influence in their continuing professional development.

Living Educational Theory Research doctorates must be judged by examiners as having made an original contribution to knowledge, as a condition for the award of the degree. Over 40 such doctorates, freely available from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>, demonstrate that the original contributions to educational knowledge, of practitioner-researchers, have been recognised by Universities around the world and are now being accepted in publications such as Educational Action Research, Action Research, the Action Learning Action Research Journal and the Educational Journal of Living Theories. Each living-educational-theory uses the unique constellation of the practitioner-researcher's values as explanatory principles in their explanations of their 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.

In clarifying and communicating the embodied expressions of the meanings of these values I have found Feyerabend's (1975, p. 17) insight useful where he points out that the meaning of a value such as freedom can only be clarified and comprehended through the course of its emergence in practice. Because I couldn't find an existing method that enabled me to clarify and communicate the expressions of the meanings of embodied values, I developed a method that uses empathetic resonance with digital visual data to clarify and communicate these meanings. This method is part of the originality of Living Educational Theory Research in creating an educational epistemology (Whitehead, 2010).

Whilst in conversation with Marie Huxtable, for our joint presentation to this conference (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2021b), Huxtable shared her insight that we were marginalising our own voices because we had not clarified and communicated the values of human flourishing in improving our practice in enhancing our systemic influence in Living Educational Theory Research, with a focus on addressing inequities through professional learning and education. I focus on this clarification and communication in the section below. This includes extracts from a successful proposal on cultivating equitable education systems for the 21st century in global contexts through living educational theory cultures of educational inquiry (DeLong, et al. 2021a). It includes extracts from a symposium presentation on educational responsibility at the 2021 AERA Conference (DeLong, 2021b) and a 2021 keynote to the Professional Development Service for Teachers with reference to the cultural influences of Irish researchers in the Network Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI).

**Significance to the Conference Strand** on the role of human experiences, identities, and culture in professional learning and practitioner education.

The role of human experiences is foundational in the generation of a living-educational-theory. It is foundational in the phenomenological (Husserl, 1912) sense that the research is grounded, in the practitioner-researcher's exploration of a question of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', within the experience of the phenomena that the researcher is seeking to understand.

The significance in terms of the identity of the practitioner-researcher is focused on the unique constellation of values that help to define the individual's identity. These values are used as explanatory principles, in professional learning, in explanations of educational influences in professional learning (Whitehead 2020).

The significance in terms of the role of culture in professional learning and practitioner education is grounded in Said's (1993, pp. xii-xiv) idea of culture as a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought. The basis of the elevating element in Living Educational Theory Research is that it includes an educational responsibility to live values of human flourishing as fully as possible.

Enhancing the systemic and cultural influences of Living Educational Theory Research is related to addressing inequities through professional learning and education through amplifying marginalised voices in contemporary times. The process of enhancing these cultural influences can be appreciated through a keynote on enhancing professionalism using Living Educational Theory Research (Whitehead, 2021) and two symposia presented and

prepared for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conferences in 2021 and 2022 (Delong et al. a & b). In the 2021 AERA conference, Delong (Canada), Whitehead (UK), Mishra (India), Vaughan (USA) and Dhungana (Nepal) focus on accepting educational responsibility in contributing to enhancing a global culture of educational enquiry together with contributions to the cultures bounded by their own contexts. In preparing for presentation of their successful proposal for the 2022 AERA Conference, Delong, Whitehead, Dhungana, Vaughan and Rawal focus on cultivating equitable education systems for the 21st century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry. For example, Rawal has been leading workshops in India on life-skills education from a Living Educational Theory Research perspective. In the map below, Rawal has included the red dots to show the location of the workshops that are contributing not only to their cultural influences in these contexts, living the value of equity, but to their global, cultural educational influences, through presentations such as these at AERA and IPDA and in publications in educational journals.



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The significance to this conference strand is also in the evidence that is used to justify the claim that Living Educational Theory Research can address inequities through professional learning and education with the amplification of marginalised voices.

My final point, on the significance to the conference strand on the role of human experiences, identities, and culture in professional learning and practitioner education, develops my keynote to the Professional Development Service for Teachers (Whitehead, 2021) where I say:

- Here are some of the forums I have contributed to myself and I do urge you to share the educational knowledge you are generating if you haven't already done so:

The Professional Development Service for Teachers; The Network Educational Action Research Ireland; The Educational Studies Association of Ireland, The Special Interest Group of ESAI on Values-based Practitioner Research; The International Professional Development Association; The Association of Teacher Education in Europe; The British Educational Research Association and The American Educational Research Association.

### **A note from the Network Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI):**

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** NEARI people <info@eari.ie>  
**Subject:** Notes from NEARIMeet October 2021  
**Date:** 9 November 2021 at 13:00:00 GMT  
**To:** undisclosed-recipients;

Dear colleagues,

The notes and video clips from our NEARIMeet in October are available on the NEARI website now at <https://www.eari.ie/2021/11/06/notes-from-nearimeet-8-october-2021/>

We hope you enjoy them. Thank you to all who participated and contributed to the learning adventure!

We look forward to meeting you at the Winter NEARIMeet, which will take place in January 2022.

Best wishes,

Bernie, Caitriona, Cornelia, Máirín and Mary

[Network of Educational Action Research in Ireland](#) (NEARI)



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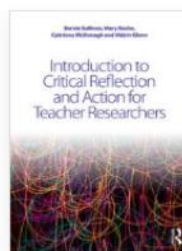
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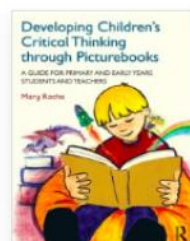


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By **Máirín Glenn, Mary Roche, Caitriona McDonagh and Bernie Sullivan**

Published: 16-11-2017  
Imprint: Bloomsbury Academic

- The Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI).

<http://esai.ie/> ESAI Conference 2022: Call for Proposals on Reconstructing Education: what matters? 7-9 April 2022

See the Values Based Practitioner Action Research (VPAR) ESAI Special Interest Group at <http://www.eari.ie/values-based-practitioner-action-research-vpar-esai-special-interest-group/>

My reason for developing and concluding with the point above is because of the priority I am now giving to cultural influences in addressing inequities through a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional learning and education: amplifying marginalised voices in contemporary times. One of the marginalised voices I wish to emphasise is my own. I have only recently recognised, thanks to a conversation with Huxtable, in preparing for our joint presentation for this conference (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2021) that my failure to clarify and communicate the co-operative values of human flourishing, in enhancing the systemic influence of Living Educational Theory research, has meant that I have contributed to these values being marginalised in educational discourses. This presentation is intended as a contribution to overcoming this marginalisation and to stressing the importance of working and researching together to spread the cultural influences of Living Educational Theory Research with values of human flourishing. I do hope that you will contribute to this influence through the International Professional Development Association with its support for the theme of the 2021 conference on 'Marginalised voices in contemporary times: addressing inequities through professional learning and education.'

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