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## **9 Legitimation of Post-Formalism with Living Theories**

Jack Whitehead

### **Introduction**

This chapter considers the academic legitimation of post-formalism in Living-Theory doctoral research programmes. It highlights the coming together of the three concepts used by Kincheloe to define post-formalist thought; deconstruction, affectivity and non-linearity. As others in this book (for instance, Boje and Pieterse) have indicated, Kincheloe wrestled with the tension between his universal values of authenticity, relatedness, emancipation, respect for the other) and the translation of those values into specific, concrete actions. The values are just so many 'grand narratives' if they are not actualized in specific, lived actions and circumstances. Kincheloe demands that we focus on transformations that can overcome the limitations of the formal logic in the theories that explain educational influences in learning. This transformation, as I have attempted it, has been in two phases. The first phase involves transcending the limitations of formal logic masking the dialectical (or dynamic, interactive and relational) nature of reality. The second phase involves transcending the limitations of dialectical logic via Living-Theory research programmes with a pedagogy in which individuals express their creativity in the construction of their own non-linear living-educational-theories, in enquiries of the kind, *'How do I improve what I am doing?'* I have coined the phrase a living-educational theory (Whitehead, 1985a) to distinguish the explanations individuals create for the educational influences they distinguish in learning, from the explanations derived from the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines of education, pedagogy, and the social studies, to explain the educational influences in learning of individual educators. By a living-educational-theory, I mean a validated explanation, produced by an individual practitioner, of the educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. Because many practitioner-researchers are now using an approach to educational action research, related to the idea of a living-educational-theory, I use capitals in 'Living-Theory' to distinguish the approach, or the shared programme of research, from the unique living-educational-theories that are created by individuals to explain their specific educational influences in learning.

Drawing on evidence from some forty Living-Theory doctoral theses accredited around the world by different universities between 1995-2012, I will be shown how post-formalism has become embedded in the living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) that have been used to legitimate these contributions to knowledge. Attention will be drawn to the importance of using digital technology in gathering visual data that can be integrated in contributions to knowledge that go beyond the meanings that can be communicated through printed text alone. Implications will be considered for changes in university regulations, governing the submission of original contributions to knowledge.

### **Legitimizing Post-Formalism with Living-Theories**

My educational research programme began in 1967 when, as a classroom teacher, I asked, *'How do I improve this process of education, right here?'* At the time, I had just completed a degree in Chemistry and Physics at the University of Durham and a postgraduate diploma in education at the University of Newcastle, and had begun teaching science in an inner city London secondary school. In 1968, I registered for a part-time Academic Diploma Course in the philosophy and psychology of education, at the Institute of Education of the University of London, to enhance my understanding of educational theories to help me to improve my practice.

I began my studies of educational theory strongly influenced by the formalism in the epistemology of my science degree, which removed 'I' from accounts, on the grounds that the 'I' made them merely anecdotal and subjective. This epistemology owed much to the formal logic of Aristotle, in which the law of Identity is expressed in the form '*A is A*'; the Law of Contradiction, expressed by the form: '*A is not not-A*', and where contradictions were eliminated from correct thought and the 'law of the excluded middle' is expressed by the form: '*A is either B or not-B*'. The law thus insists that there can be no third or middle judgment as: '*A is either B or not-B*'. Leibnitz added the Law of sufficient reason to formal logic, which states that everything has a sufficient reason for its existence. Hence, arguments that make a case in terms of necessary and sufficient reasons are considered to be strong arguments in formal reasoning. The legitimization of post-formalism, I submit, is focused on the significance of legitimizing the inclusion of the 'I' as a living contradiction in contributions to knowledge.

For the past forty-six years my educational practices (1967-2013) as an educator and my research as an educational researcher, have been intimately related. When I begin teaching in 1967, I recall my first class in which I could see that I was not communicating my scientific understanding to my pupils. I recall saying to myself, 'I've got to do this better' and my question to myself was, '*How do I do this better?*' 'This' referred to my educational influence in my student's learning through scientific enquiry. A desire to enhance my professionalism, through exploring the implications of my question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and through my studies of theories of education, has remained with me to this day.

I had come across a book on Ethics and Education by Richard Peters, a Philosopher of Education at the Institute of Education at the University of London. Having accepted a teaching post at Langdon Park School, in London's East End in 1967, I registered for the Academic Diploma Course in Philosophy of Psychology of Education, where a team of philosophers led by Richard Peters taught the philosophy component. Formal logic had dominated the epistemologies in both my studies of philosophy and psychology of education, as well as what I'd learned of sociology and the history of education. In the philosophy course, Richard Peters and the other philosophers encouraged the students to explore the implications for a person who was seriously asking themselves questions of the kind, '*What ought I to do?*' Using a Kantian form of transcendental deduction, the philosophers argued that the ethical principles of justice, freedom, worthwhile activities, respect for persons and equality, together with the procedural principle of democracy, were implied within the question, '*What ought I to do?*' The central principle behind the course was that the disciplines of education constituted Educational Theory. In 1970, I was awarded the Academic Diploma and had a firm belief in this view of Educational Theory. I also believed in the validity of formal reasoning, from my science degree, which also emphasized the superiority of randomized controlled experimental designs for the generation of knowledge about the world. However, as I came to realize a year later, the 'I' in the question, '*What ought I to do?*' remained formal whilst pretending that it contained content in itself (see below).

In 1970 I registered at the Institute of Education for the Masters Degree in the Psychology of Education. At the same time, I became Head of the Science Department of Erkenwald Comprehensive School in Barking, in East London. My sense of vocation, focused on helping my pupils to develop their scientific understanding. Hence my dissertation project for my Masters degree was on: '*A preliminary investigation of the process through which adolescents develop scientific understanding.*' I was seeking knowledge that would help me to improve my educational influence in my students' learning. I was interested in the relative influences of guided discovery and enquiry learning in my students' understanding of science. Under the influence of formal logic and positivist epistemology, I randomly allocated students to groups. I used Bloom's taxonomy and Piagetian cognitive stage theory to give content and construct validity to my test items, and a statistical analysis of co-variance to demonstrate the influence of guided discovery and enquiry learning in the students' scientific understanding. As I conducted my enquiry, I came to understand that it was focused on testing the validity of Bloom's Taxonomy and Piagetian cognitive stage theory, rather than focused on my enquiry: '*How do I improve my practice?*'

A major transformation in my thinking occurred during the 1971-2 academic year as I continued with my reading of philosophy, including Michael Polanyi's (1958) *Personal*

*Knowledge.* I reflected on the efficacy of the knowledge I was gaining from my continuing professional development in enhancing my influence of my student's learning. I was also exploring the use of a video-camera and recorder, supplied by the Inspectorate for me to explore its educational potential in the Science Department.

I want to stress that the legitimization of post-formalism with living theories takes time and struggle. The struggle can be seen below in engagements with the power relations that support formalism in resisting the academic legitimization of post-formal contributions to knowledge. The start of my process of legitimating post-formalism came in 1971, with my recognition of serious limitations in my formal thinking, in the disciplines approach to educational theory. The tension, which moved me to develop a post-formal understanding of educational theory, had a number of sources. The first source emerged from my practice as I continued with my enquiry, *'How do I improve what I am doing?'* in the context of teaching science in my classrooms. This location of my enquiry is consistent with Kincheloe's concept of a classroom as a particular concrete classroom, and not an abstract or theoretical one. As I reflected on my learning and explained to myself my educational influences in my pupils' learning I could not contain or subsume these explanations within the conceptual frameworks of any of the theories from the disciplines of education. Because I believed in the validity of my explanations of my educational influence I came to see that the explanations generated from the disciplines of education were too limited to constitute an educational theory. I became convinced that valid forms of educational theory needed to include the explanations that individuals produced for their educational influences in learning.

The second source emerged from my reading and understanding of Michael Polanyi's (1958) book on *'Personal Knowledge - towards a post-critical philosophy.'* A fundamental decision of personal knowledge occurs when the individual, to understand the world from his or her own point of view as a person claiming originality and exercising judgment and responsibly, does so with universal intent. Making this decision reinforced my belief that the limitations in the disciplines approach to educational theory were due to the elimination of the personal knowledge of the practitioner that was grounded in their embodied knowledge. The practitioner's knowledge had been eliminated on the grounds that the principles in this knowledge *'were at best pragmatic principles having a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more theoretical justification.'* (Hirst, 1983, p. 18).

The third source emerged as I watched a video-tape I had taken of one of my science lessons. I had turned the camera on myself and experienced the shock and embarrassment of seeing myself denying in my practice some of the beliefs and values that I held. I believed that I had established enquiry learning in my science classrooms. By this I mean that I believed I was encouraging the students to ask their own questions and that I was making a serious response to helping them answer their questions in a scientific enquiry. I valued the asking of questions, as I believed that the capacity to ask questions and to use scientific methods in answering them was fundamental to developing scientific understanding. As I viewed the video-tape of my lesson, I could see that I was giving the students questions to answer, rather than encouraging them to ask their own questions. As I viewed the video I experienced myself, my 'I', as a 'living contradiction' in the sense that I held together the experience of valuing enquiry learning, while at the same time negating this value in my practice. This experience of existing as a living contradiction included my recognition of the importance of 'affect' in explaining my educational influence. It was 'affect' focused on my experience of not living as fully as I could (should) the values I used to give meaning and purpose to my life in education.

Kincheloe's 'turn to affect' was politicized by his identification of 'unfreedom'. My own 'turn to affect' was reinforced by responses to experiences of constraints to my academic freedom in the workplace (Whitehead, 1993), as I describe below. What I also experienced was the spontaneous response of imagining what I could do to improve my practice so that I could live my valuing of enquiry learning more fully in my practice. Some six weeks later, my video-tapes showed that I was creating conditions in my classroom in which some of my students were asking and answering their own questions. From this experience, I understood the importance of seeing my 'I' in my question: *'How do I improve what I am doing?'*, as

addressing a living contradiction in the sense of holding particular values while at the same time negating them in my practice.

Because of the importance of engaging with the power relations that are constraining the legitimation of post-formalism, I think that it is worth repeating that the transformation from a formal to a post-formal epistemology, took time, reflection and struggle, as did the following process of legitimating the post-formal epistemology with living-theory in the Academy. The process of legitimation can be followed through my publications, especially Whitehead (1993) and through the legitimation of living-theory theses in various universities around the world (see the living-theory section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>). Before I began to legitimize post-formalism with living theories I had to know, in an embodied sense, what it was that I wanted to legitimize. This knowledge developed gradually in the 1970s with a critical period in 1976 with two evaluation reports I produced for an 11-14 Mixed Ability Exercise in Science (Whitehead, 1976a; 1976b). This Exercise was funded by The Schools Council in the UK as part of a new initiative to support local curriculum development. I worked with six teachers over some 18 months to enquire into the process of improving learning for 11-14 year olds in mixed ability science groups. In March 1976, I produced the first of my evaluation reports and submitted the draft to the six teachers for their criticisms. Some of my academic colleagues had read the report and said how much they liked the way I had used advanced contemporary theories to explain the influence of the project.

The theories focused on the four models of innovation of: (i) Social Interaction/Diffusion; (ii) Research Development and Dissemination; (iii) Problem Solving; (iv) Creativity. They included a theory of change in the teaching learning process from formal instruction to informal instruction, to discovery and Inquiry. They included a democratic model of evaluation. My academic colleagues related to these theories and accepted that they provided valid explanatory frameworks within which to explain the educational influences of teachers. The logic and language of this first evaluation report conformed to the laws of formal logic.

The six teachers responded to my draft report in a way that surprised me. They said that they recognized the 'academic' quality of the report, but that they could not see themselves in the report. I could see that the criticism was justified. I had 'defaulted' back into the disciplines approach to educational theory, and applied existing theories with their formal logic and language to explain the living influences of the practitioners. In doing this, I had replaced the explanatory principles used by the teachers by the conceptual frameworks in the models and theories of academe. The teachers asked me to go back to the original data, which included video-tapes of classroom practices, photographs, taped conversations with teachers and pupils, and worksheets designed by the teachers. They asked me to reconstruct the report in a way that they could see themselves in it. By August 1976, working with Paul Hunt, one of the teachers, we completed the second evaluation report. This was received by all the teachers as a valid description and explanation of our work together. They all agreed that they could now recognize themselves in the report and believed that the explanations I had produced, of the parts they had played in the project, were valid. This second report of August 1976 (Whitehead, 1976b) marked a change in my understanding of educational theory as the explanations were given in the form of action reflection cycles, in which the individual teachers:

- Expressed a concern when they were not living their values as fully as they believed that they could do.
- Imagined possibilities for improving their practice and chose one possibility in an action plan to act on.
- Acted and gathered data to make a judgment about the effectiveness of their influence in relation to their values and understandings.
- Evaluated the effectiveness of their influence in terms of their values and understandings.
- Modified their concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations.
- Produced a validated explanation of their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of their students.

I do not want to give the impression that the legitimization of post-formalism with living-theories has been an easy or smooth story (MacLure, 1996; Whitehead, 2012). As the reception of the first report above shows, there were rejections along the way and the need for resilience in continuing the enquiry. Two of the most serious rejections occurred in 1980 and 1982, when I submitted my first two doctorates to the University of Bath. These were not only rejected. I was not permitted to resubmit either of the theses. What angered me at the time was the Registrar's interpretation of the University Regulations when he wrote in response to my request to challenge the judgments of my examiners, that once the examiners were appointed by Senate **their judgments could not be questioned under any circumstances**. It took until 1991 to change the regulations to permit questions to be raised about examiner's judgments on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment.

In 1985, I published two papers that began the process of legitimating post-formalism with living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1985a; 1985b). Both papers focused attention on an analysis of nine research reports that I had produced between 1972-1985 to explain my educational influence in my enquiry: 'How do I improve what I am doing?' In the 1985a paper I introduced the idea of a living-educational-theory as follows:

*'My purpose is to draw your attention to the development of a living form of educational theory. The theory is grounded in the lives of professional educators and their pupils and has the power to integrate within itself the traditional disciplines of education.'*  
(Whitehead, 1985a, p. 97)

The analysis in the two papers was formal in the sense that I applied Mitroff's and Kilman's (1978) logics and methods of enquiry that distinguished four methodological approaches to the social sciences to the reports. Here is how I revealed the need to go beyond the formal logics and methods of enquiry of the four methodological approaches, in responding to a criticism from the philosopher Edgar Wilson (1983) that I put dialectical and propositional logics in opposition:

*I put dialectical and propositional logics in opposition*

This statement is manifestly false. The truth is that in my dialectical view of education I use propositions within the dialectical form of my enquiry. I see my educational development as a process of transformation within which propositional forms can be clearly distinguished. In my original article I presented a classification of my research reports which showed that my educational development could be partially understood as a scientific enquiry. The principles used in the classification were presented in a propositional form and drawn from the work of Medawar (12) and Popper (13). Any idea that I put the two logics in opposition should be dispelled by the analysis shown in the table below. The table shows how I have used Kosok's (13) work to demonstrate how a propositional form exists within the dialectical form of my educational development. I would draw Wilson's attention to the fact that dialecticians do not put the two logics in opposition. It is rather the philosopher with an orthodox view of knowledge who excludes the academic legitimacy of dialectical claims to knowledge and places them in a conflicting relationship. The dialectician shows how the orthodox view can be incorporated and transcended within his approach.

I use Kosok's (14) idea of a 'Transition Structure' to show how the propositional form (in, for example, the disciplines of education) can be incorporated within the process of transformation of education. I am using the concept of 'Transition Structure' as a form of thought which exists within the transformatory nature of a form of life. For example, in the table below I distinguish five Popperian Schemas (13) of formulating problems, proposing hypotheses, eliminating errors and reformulating problems. I have also used Medawar's (12) classification of a scientific enquiry. Medawar distinguishes between critical and creative phases in a scientific enquiry. He says that these phases alternate and interact. In the creative phase we formulae an idea, we propose a hypothesis or we experience a problem. In the critical phase we test the idea, usually by experiment. This pattern of the alternate creative and critical phases in the enquiry can be seen in the table below. Mitroff and Kilman (15) distinguish four methodological approaches to

the social sciences. They refer to the four approaches as those of the Analytic Scientist, the Conceptual Theorist, the Conceptual Humanist and the Particular Humanist. They give the different criteria for distinguishing the modes of enquiry and the preferred logics which characterise each approach. The table shows where I have used the four approaches in my reports. The pattern shows that the critical, schematic and methodological reports correspond. It also indicates the possibility of a fifth methodological approach which is not within the Mitroff and Kilman classification.

The table presents an analysis of my educational development as *'The form of life of a living contradiction'*. This analysis includes the propositional forms from the above classifications. The propositional forms, in reports 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9, are integrated within the process of transformation between the reports. I characterise this process as the form of life of a living contradiction.

The process of legitimizing post-formalism with living-theories includes supervising and gaining academic legitimation for living- theory doctoral theses and Masters dissertations. It includes publishing in international refereed journals. It includes presenting keynotes and other papers at national and international conferences. It includes writing books. You can access the results of many these activities in the Jack Whitehead's writings section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>. These include my 1993 book *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: Creating your own Living Educational Theories* (Whitehead, 1993).

### THE FORM OF LIFE OF A LIVING CONTRADICTION

report	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a	9
Medawar's phase of scientific enquiry	critical	creative	critical	creative	critical	creative	critical	creative	critical
the Popperian schema	1	ss -	2	-	5 3	-	5 4	-	5 5
Mitroff & Kilman's methodological approach	analytic scientist		concept-tual theorist		concept-tual humanist		particular humanist		
Kosok's self-linearizing	a non-linear dialectic process depicted as a self-linearizing form which reveals transition structures (in the schemas and critical phases) as nodal points of self-reflection								

The first of what I consider to be my most significant papers is the 1989a paper on *Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'*, published in the *Cambridge Journal of Education*. The second is the 1989b paper on *How do we Improve Research-based Professionalism in Education? A question which includes action research, educational theory and the politics of educational knowledge*. This was my 1988 Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association, published in the *British Educational Research Journal*. The legitimation of post-formalism with living-theories continued with the legitimation of my living-theory doctorate in 1999 by the University of Bath on *How do I improve my practice? Creating a discipline of education through educational enquiry* (Whitehead, 1999). I take great care, in my supervision of living-educational-theories,

to ensure that the Abstracts communicate clearly the original contribution to knowledge made in the thesis. Here is my own Abstract:

### **Abstract**

This thesis shows how living educational standards of originality of mind and critical judgment in educational enquiries has created a discipline of education.

The meanings of these standards emerged from an analysis of my research published between 1977-1999. The analysis proceeds from the base of my experience of myself, my 'I', as a living contradiction in the question '*How do I improve this process of education here?*'

An 'educational' methodology, which includes 'I' as a living contradiction, emerges from the application of a four-fold classification of methodologies of the social sciences. Then the idea of living educational theories emerges in terms of the descriptions and explanations which individual learners produce for their own educational development.

A logic of the question '*How do I improve my practice?*' emerges from my engagement with the ideas of others and from an exploration of the question in the practical contradictions between the power of truth and the truth of power in my workplace.

A discipline of education, with its standards of originality of mind and critical judgement, is defined and extended into my educative influences as a professional educator in the enquiry '*How do I help you to improve your learning?*'

My living educational theory continues to develop in the enquiry '*How do I live my values more fully in my practice?*' I explain my present practice in terms of an evaluation of my past learning, in terms of my present experiences of spiritual, aesthetic and ethical contradictions in my educative relations and in terms of my proposals for living my values more fully in the future.

The next transformation in the legitimation of living-theories came in 2004 with a change in regulations governing the submission of research degrees to the University of Bath. As a member of a working party, established by Senate to review the regulations, I had supported a recommendation to Senate that the regulations should be changed to explicitly permit the submission of e-media in research degrees. This opened the way for the submission of doctoral theses in the form of multi-media narratives. It opened the way for ostensive communication of the embodied meanings. The first living-theory doctorate to be legitimated with visual data in the multi-media narrative was *Mary Hartog's (2004) Ph.D. A Self Study Of A Higher Education Tutor 'How Can I Improve My Practice?'*

While working full time at the University of Bath between 1973-2009 and supervising doctoral research programmes at the University until 2012, I had been subjected to the cultural pressures to conform to the formal logic of publications in traditional academic journals. This pressure continues for many academics in the UK where the funding for the Research Excellence Framework continues to include publications in these journals. I recognize this pressure as a fundamental obstacle to legitimating post-formalism.

While I could recognize the limitations of publishing in these journals, in order to fulfill what I saw as my responsibility to colleagues in the Department of Education to play my part in obtaining research funding, I published in them. In doing this, I recognize myself as a living contradiction. By this I mean that the 'I' in my texts remained formal in the sense of Adorno's critique of Heidegger that the 'I' remains formal whilst pretending to contain content in itself.

Adorno's thesis is that Heidegger's notion of selfness remains a reified tributary of Husserl's concept of the subject. This concept of subject, in attempting to overcome the pure possibility of the ontic, claims to be itself concrete. Hence, Heidegger dogmatically proclaims his concept of existence as something in opposition to identity - while at the same time he 'continues the tradition of the doctrine of identity with his implicit definition of the self through its own preservation

*'Hence, Adorno examines the notions of 'Dasein,' 'authenticity,' 'death,' 'care,' etc., and shows that their use evades the issue of historical determinateness by means of a primary and absolute creative subject - which is, by definition, supposedly untouched by reification.*

*Hence the aura of authenticity in Heidegger is that it names 'nothing'; the 'I' remains formal and yet pretends that the word contains content in-itself. For Adorno, Heidegger's existentialism is a new Platonism which implies that authenticity comes in the complete disposal of the person over himself - as if there were no determination emerging from the objectivity of history.'*

(Schroyer, 1973, p. vvii)

Whilst the majority of academic journals still conform to the Aristotelian logic of formalism, there are some on-line journals that are now open to multi-media narratives with non-linear explanations. These multi-media forms of representation with digital technology offer a further opportunity to legitimise post-formalism with living theories.

Showing you what I mean by this final transformation in the legitimation of post-formalism with living-theories is not easy, because of the limitations of printed-text. To be understood is a transformation involving the use of digitalised visual data from one's own practice, to communicate ostensive expressions of meaning that are embodied and clarified in the course of their emergence in practice. To communicate something of my meaning, using words alone, brings me to describe a process of 'empathetic resonance' using digitalised visual data (Huxtable, 2009). In communicating this meaning, I ask you to reflect on an experience where you have felt a flow of life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity. To show you what I am meaning by such a flow of life affirming energy, I ask you to google 'Nelson Mandela on Ubuntu' and to watch the video-clip of Nelson Mandela explaining the meaning of Ubuntu. I imagine that everyone reading this paper knows something of the life of Nelson Mandela and may have felt the flow of his life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity, in the face of his twenty-seven years of imprisonment for his struggle against Apartheid. In advocating that everyone shares stories of their lives, in which they explain their educational influences in terms of their values and understandings, I am bearing in mind the inspiration that can come through an individual's story such as that of Nelson Mandela. Ben Okri (1996) captures the significance of such stories when he writes:

#### **To poison a nation, poison its stories**

*'A demoralised nation tells demoralised stories to itself. Beware of the story-tellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art: they could unwittingly help along the psychic destruction of their people ...' (p. 17)*

*'Stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals or nations live by and tell themselves, and you change the individuals and nations ...' (p. 21)*

The transformation I wish to try to communicate has to do with understanding the legitimation of post-formalism with living theories. I will describe the shift from a dialectical perspective, to a relationally dynamic perspective of natural inclusion with its non-linear logic (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009). I was introduced to this perspective by Alan Rayner (2004) when he described inclusionality as a relationally dynamic awareness of space, and boundaries as connected, reflective, and co-creative. Seeing myself, with visual data, as existing within space and within specific relationships and boundaries, had a transformative influence on my understanding of the living logic of post-formalism within living-theories. I am understanding logic in Marcuse's sense (1964, p. 105), as a mode of thought that comprehends the real as rational.



Having explained that print-based texts have limitations in the communication of post-formalist explanations, I wish to draw your attention to how multi-media narratives can overcome these limitations. I am thinking of narratives that have been legitimated as post-formalist explanations of educational influences in learning; clarified in the course of their emergence in enquiries of the kind: 'How do I improve what I am doing?' At the heart of my post-formalist pedagogy is the following insight from Lyotard:

*'A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done.'*  
(Lyotard, 1986, p. 81)

To better understand my meanings you can access the resources available freely from the web-site: <http://www.actionresearch.net>. As you access this web-site, you can an electronic portal on your screen that gives access to numerous living-theory accounts from all over the world that have been legitimated in different universities; here is the first page of the Living-Theory Section (as of 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013):

## Living Theory Theses

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Yvonne Crotty's Ph.D. (2012) Thesis, How am I bringing an educationally entrepreneurial spirit into higher education? Dublin City University, 2012.</a></u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Simon Hughes' Ph.D. (2012) Thesis, Towards auto/pedagogy: A reflexive auto/biographic case study of professional learning mediated by technology. University of Wolverhampton, 2012.</a></u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Jack Whitehead's Ph.D. Volume Two (1999) Thesis, How do I improve my practice? Creating a discipline of education through educational enquiry.</a></u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Keith Kinsella's Ph.D. (2012) Thesis, Revealing what is 'tacit/rationally-invisible/in the background': an online coaching pedagogy for developing improved leadership practice through 'presencing empathetic responsiveness' University of Bath, 2012.</a></u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Phil Tattersall's Ph.D. (2011) Thesis, How am I generating a living theory of environmental activism with inclusionality? Graduating April 2013 from the University of Western Sydney.</a></u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Mark Potts' Ph.D. (2012) Thesis, How can I Reconceptualise International Educational Partnerships as a Form of 'Living Citizenship'? Bath Spa University, 2012.</a></u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Marie Huxtable's Ph.D. (2012) Thesis, How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?. Graduated 5th July 2012, University of Bath.</a></u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>M.A.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Linda Vargas' MA (2010) Dissertation, Out the Box: Flamenco as Educational A Living Theory Study of Dance in Primary Education. The University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010.</a></u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Ian Phillips' Ph.D. (2011) Thesis, 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. Graduated 14 December 2011, University of Bath.</a></u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ed.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Anat Geller's Ed.D. Thesis (2010) Within Dialogue and Without: How has 'Being in the Unkown' become a value in my developing as a better dialogical educator? University of Bath.(live connections to video clips from the text need adding</a></u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ph.D.</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Marian Lothian's Ph.D. (2010) Thesis, How can I improve my practice to enhance the teaching of literacy. Graduated from McGill University.</a></u></p>	

**Figure 1:** Living Theory Theses

I wish to emphasize that the majority of these living-theory theses were not supervised by myself. And they have been examined and legitimated by other Universities as well as the University of Bath. I am hopeful that this evidence will convince you of the value of producing and legitimating your own living-theories as your explanations of educational influences in learning, as you seek to live your values of humanity as fully as possible in your post-formalist pedagogy.

One of the ways you could contribute to the further legitimation of post-formalism is by publishing your narratives in multi-media journals such as the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* on <http://ejolts.net> (Whitehead, 2008). You could also join in the conversations of practitioner-researchers from around the world, who are sharing their enquiries as they research their activities and living their values as fully as they can. You can access these conversations by joining the practitioner-researcher e-forum in the 'What's New' section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>. I look forward to reading your submissions and participating in future conversations as the process of legitimating post-formalism, continues.

Each of our narratives potentially relates to Kincheloe's post-formalist thought in terms of deconstruction, affectivity and non-linearity. To focus on questions of the kind: '*How do I improve my practice here?*', in our social contexts, requires deconstruction in realizing the '*crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework*' (p. 381). Our affectivity is included in the values we use as explanatory principles in our explanations of educational influence. The non-linearity of our explanations can be communicated in multi-media narratives that show the relationally dynamic nature of our inclusion within the sociohistorical and socioculture contexts that influence what we do and think, as we seek to enhance, within these contexts, the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

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