

A Living Educational Research Approach to Global Perspectives in Teacher Education: An Alternative to the Standard Education Model

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Abstract

This paper offers the findings of educational research into teachers' professional learning within global contexts with values of higher education, global citizenship, intercultural education and internationalisation. The research offers a framing for continuing professional learning in global contexts. It supports the UNESCO Education 2030 goals through contributing to partnerships, networks and collaborations that support the development and vision of high-quality sustainable teacher education across the world. The Living Educational Theory Research approach is grounded in the professional learning of teachers and other professionals as they create and share their valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their practice is located. It includes analyses of contributions to the 4th 2024 International Conference of Transformative Educational Research and Sustainable Development and the 2024 Conference of the International Professional Development Association with its theme of 'Here be Dragons, I am not a Robot'. The Dragons confronted and overcome include: the application of positivist scientific methods to teachers' professional learning; attempts to remove the 'I' of the teacher from their research into their professional practice; the resistance to digital visual data in explanations of educational influences in learning; and the difficulties of developing an ecological world view. Validation of claims to knowledge includes the mutual rational controls of critical discussions with criteria of comprehensibility, evidence, sociohistorical and

sociocultural understandings and authenticity in terms of values of human flourishing.

Introduction

This research is undertaken in an interconnected world where ‘local’ actions have ‘global’ consequences. We recognise that we live in a world where there are a variety of knowledges created in diverse sociocultural, political, historical and linguistic contexts to serve various, and sometimes conflicting, purposes. We also realise that “one word carries a life-time of meaning” (Shirley Johnson, poet, as communicated in a conversation with her daughter). So, before going further to introduce an argument for ‘A Living Educational Research Approach to Global Perspectives in Teacher Education’ we first clarify our meaning of ‘education’ (as a values-laden process), what constitutes the role of teachers as educators, and the responsibilities that distinguish teachers as professional practitioners.

‘Education’ is given many meanings in the literature. Here we refer to ‘education’ as a life-long, life-wide process of learning to live humanely a personally satisfying, and socially productive and worthwhile life, helping others to do so too, and contributing to the flourishing of Humanity as a benign presence in the world we are all part of.

Teachers have many roles and responsibilities. Winch (2013, p.13) for example presents a teacher as “craft worker”, as “executive technician” and as “professional”. Morrison (2014) presents the role of a teacher as moving from a “sage on the stage” to a “guide on the side”. Neither Winch nor Morrison refer to a teacher’s responsibility for the creation of knowledge that is educational, and contributing the validated knowledge they generate to the evolution of global educational knowledge. However, this responsibility is explicit in distinguishing our meaning of ‘professionalism’.

Hence, as well as requiring a professional to meet the standards of a professional body (or controlling organisation), our meaning of ‘professional’ requires the professional practitioner to take responsibility for their own continuing

professional development as they ask, research and answer questions of the kind, 'How do I enhance the educational influences of my professional practice?'. They realise these responsibilities by researching their practice to understand and improve it, generate valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations for their educational influences. These are their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their practice is located, and contributing the knowledge generated to a global knowledgebase for the benefit of all.

Here we focus on teachers' professional learning to fulfil their role as professional educators contributing to the learning of the institution of education, which is the context of their practice, to realise its *raison d'être* with values of human flourishing; the learning of those who comprise it, such as their students and colleagues. In their professional development the teacher-educators explain their own learning to improve their educational, values-laden practice and realise their values-laden responsibilities. These involve contributing to a world where individuals can flourish, help others to do so too and Humanity flourishes as a benign presence.

The purposes institutions of education, such as school and universities, are expected to serve, are shaped by the complex, relationally dynamic, local, national and global ecologies within which they exist. Perhaps the most potent influences are those emanating from the social, cultural climate and the political ideologies of the day. Problems arise when the expression of one ideology in policy and practice contradicts another ideology. For example, some countries need fossil fuel to currently thrive yet in doing so contradiction what other nations are doing to 'go green' and reduce emissions. Teacher education policies in Afghanistan are denying access to education, by girls and women. These policies conflict with those of the United Nations that support equality of educational provision.

The prevailing global social cultural climate and political ideologies might crudely be represented by countries more orientated to where individualistic, neoliberal, competitive, extrinsic values (Crompton 2010) are the driving forces, and countries more orientated to collectivist, liberal, co-operative, intrinsic values.

Countries, like individual people, are rarely in reality simply positioned at the 'poles', both of which have their problems in practice. Both positions are often adapted, to a lesser or greater extent, at the same time, even though they produce policies and strategies which conflict. Countries, like individual people, don't examine the complex ground on which they stand nor the implications for their own flourishing, the flourishing of others and the flourishing of Humanity as a benign presence in the world, and (as we increasingly 'boldly go' into space) the universe. That brings us to why we want to present a Living Educational Theory Research approach to global perspectives in teacher education as an alternative to the 'Standard Education Model' at this BERA conference considering:

... concrete solutions which support the UNESCO Education 2030 goals with the aim of allowing partnerships, networks and collaborations to be developed that will take forward some purposeful and real projects to... support the development and vision of high-quality sustainable teacher education across the world. (BERA, 2025)

We believe this will contribute to resolving "the current recruitment and retention crises in teaching" (ibid). In the paper we:

- a. Provide a well-reasoned argument for developing a Living Educational Theory Research approach to teacher education within a global context
- b. Make claims about the implications of this approach for improving education
- c. Provide evidence to support our claims
- d. Critically engage with and draw insights from the literature
- e. Make clear the significance of the paper.

The paper is organised as follows:

- Research purpose and aims
- Living Educational Theory Research Methodology
- Data and Analysis
- Discussion
- Conclusion and Call to Action

Research Purpose and Aims

The main purpose of our research is to offer a Living Educational Theory Research approach to global perspectives in teacher education as an alternative to the 'Standard Education Model' currently adopted by many countries.

Specifically, the research aims to:

- Frame continuing professional learning in global contexts in ways that contribute to high-quality and sustainable teacher education worldwide.
- Support the UNESCO Education 2030 goals and foster partnerships, networks, and collaborations.
- Offer an alternative to the standard model of teacher education which challenges "dragons" such as:
 - The application of positivist scientific methods to teachers' professional learning;
 - Attempts to remove the 'I' of the teacher from their research into their own professional practice;
 - Resistance to the use of digital visual data in explaining educational influences on learning and;
 - The challenges involved in developing an ecological worldview.

Living Educational Theory Research Methodology

Living Educational Theory Research originated by Whitehead (seminal text 1989) is now a well-established methodology as evidenced by doctorates legitimated by universities worldwide. It emerged from Jack Whitehead's dissatisfaction with the disciplines approach to educational theory in which theory in the field of education was held to be constituted by the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. Whitehead proposed that *educational* theory was constituted by the validated explanations that practitioner-researchers produced to explain their educational, values-laden influences in their own learning in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the

practice was located. Details of the genesis and evolution of Living Educational Theory Research has been published most recently in 'Living Educational Theory Research as an Epistemology for Practice: The role of values in practitioners' professional development' (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2024)

The methodology of Living Educational Theory Research differs from the methodology of traditional research programmes. In traditional programmes it is usual to for a methodology to be chosen before the research begins. Whitehead (2018) has explained how a methodology emerges in Living Educational Theory Research in the generation of a valid, evidence-based and values laden explanation of educational influences in learning. Such methodologies can draw insights from traditional methodologies without a choice being made.

For a professional practitioner researcher's methodology to be recognised as a Living Educational Theory Research methodology it must include a validated, evidence-based and values-laden explanation of the researcher's educational influence in their own learning in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation within which the practice is located. The meanings of the embodied values of human flourishing are what distinguish the learning as educational. Hence it is important for the professional practitioner to focus on clarifying the meanings of the values of human flourishing they embody. Meanings of the embodied values are clarified as the research progresses, often using a process of empathetic resonance with digital visual data (Whitehead, 2010).

The methodology must also include a focus on the methods they employ for validating their evidence-based and values-laden explanations of their educational influences in learning. Living-educational-theories are validated using Popper's (1975, p. 44) insight on the mutual rational control of critical discussion. The validation of the explanations includes the use of validation groups of between 3-8 peers that focus on: the comprehensibility of the explanation of educational influences in learning; the nature of the evidence to support the claims to knowledge; the sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of these influences in the explanation; the authenticity of the explanation (Habermas, 2076, pp. 2-3) in

the sense of showing that the researcher is living their values of humanity as fully as possible, and the coherence of the rationale.

We make the following distinction between Living Educational Theory and a living-educational-theory. The distinction is important as in traditional research individual explanations are derived from the general principles of the theory. In Living Educational Theory Research the explanations are generated by individuals for their educational influences in learning. They are not generated from general principles. In the process of generating a living-educational-theory an individual's research methodology is generated in the course of the research rather than applied at the beginning from a general methodology such as Action Research, Case Study or Autoethnography.

Data and Analyses

Each of the theses below has been selected to exemplify a Living Educational Theory Research Approach employed by professional practitioners in various global, sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts and fields of practice. Each practitioner has made an original contribution to knowledge rather than conform to the standard education model as a consumer of other researchers' research. This supports our argument for adopting a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to "Global Perspectives in Teacher Education as An Alternative to the Standard Education Model".

The data from the doctorates are publicly and freely accessible from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>. This allows readers to decide for themselves whether our analysis is empirically grounded and valid. We draw on these doctorates because their knowledge claims have been validated by disinterested academics through the examination process. In awarding these doctorates, universities worldwide have recognized the research conducted by these professional practitioners as making original contributions to global knowledge.

For example, Mounter (2024) identified a weakness in Living Educational Theory Research in relation to the clarification and communication of the standards used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in the

learning of social formations. In her living-educational-theory doctoral thesis, Mounter offers 'Living Professionalism' as a contribution to the evolution of a global perspective in Teacher Education with values of human flourishing.

Sadrudin Bahadur Qutoshi's doctorate focuses on 'Creating Living-Educational-Theory: A Journey Towards Transformative Teacher Education in Pakistan'. Through his research he addresses the problem of responding to the culturally disempowering nature of teacher education in Pakistan which follows a standard education model. He shows how the knowledge he creates emerged as he engaged in an autobiographical excavation of his socio-pedagogical context. The global significance of Qutoshi's living-educational-theory is in his creative response to:

- 1) Dictating and communicating views of leadership;
- 2) Narrowly conceived traditional view of curriculum images;
- 3) Conventional and somehow learner-centered pedagogies;
- 4) Assessment as 'of' learning and 'for' learning approaches; and
- 5) Objectivist and constraint pluralist research practices.

Qutoshi's purpose, in working with these research themes, was to demonstrate the meanings of his embodied values through exploring, explaining and interpreting the themes that arose from his research questions. He envisioned an alternative to the standard education model through his transformative teacher education and research practices. This included reflexivity, inclusive logics, multiple genres and perspectival language as multiple ways of knowing. His alternative to the standard model included:

- 1) Interpretivism to make subjective level meaning making by embracing 'emergence' as the nature of his inquiry;
- 2) Criticalism to develop his critical reflexivity in identifying and addressing his research problem;

- 3) Postmodernism to engage with multiple genres and logics for cultivating different aspects of his experiences; and
- 4) Integralism to embrace an inclusive-holistic view in representing his visions of transformative teacher education and research practices in Pakistan.

Huxtable's (2012) doctorate, 'How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?', contributes to a global perspective of teacher education. She offers an alternative to the standard education model that is focused on the inclusion and clarification of ontological and social values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. Huxtable's ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society serve as her explanatory principles and evaluative standards of her practice (Huxtable, Abstract, 2012).

Given the prevalence of armed conflict around the world, we think it important to acknowledge the living-educational-theories generated within these conflicts. For example, Anat Geller (2010), an Israeli Living Educational Theory Researcher working in the context of teacher-education writes in her thesis, 'Within Dialogue And Without: How Has 'Being In The Unknown' Become a Value in My Developing as a Better Dialogical Educator?':

I am an Israeli-Jew, a Hebrew-speaking woman with an American background that has been categorised as 'whiteness' (Luttrell, 2000:509) and 'master status'.(Cochran-Smith, 2000:172). Despite the fact that I speak little Arabic, I taught in an Israeli-Arab college that is predominately Muslim and I also acted as co-ordinator and teacher in a course for pre-kindergarten caregivers for Druze women on the Golan Heights . At the same time I have been working as a pedagogy instructor in an Academic Teachers' Training College that is affiliated with the Zionist Kibbutz movement, servicing the multicultural and multinational sectors of the Israeli society.

I have lived through 55 years of war and love, hate, hope, beauty and powers of destruction. While writing this thesis, I lived through two wars, terrible for

all sides concerned. The Second Lebanon War flared up while I was studying at Bath. In the span of twenty-four hours, I was in the most beautiful peaceful location of Bath and down in a bomb shelter bombarded with rockets and noise. My home is five hundred metres from the Lebanese border. The second war was in Gaza, down in the south.

This is only one cycle in the ecological perspective of my home environment.

As well as the data in the doctoral theses above, (more can be accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>) we draw on data from the living-posters (<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2025.pdf>) and publications in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs, <https://ejolts.net/>) to make our case for a 'Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Global Perspectives in Teacher Education as an Alternative to the Standard Education Model'. For teacher-educators, who wish to bring global issues of peace education (Arnoy, 2025) and responses to poverty into their curriculum (Rawlader, 2025), we recommend living-educational-theory perspectives from cooperations between researchers in Norway and Bangladesh (Rahman, 2025) and accessing the Education for Development and Sustainability (EDS) group page on <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2025.pdf>.

We offer the individual living-educational-theories above to show an alternative to: the application of positivist scientific methods to teachers' professional learning; attempts to remove the 'I' of the teacher from their research into their own professional practice; resistance to the use of digital visual data in explaining educational influences on learning; and the challenges involved in developing an ecological worldview.

Discussion

The discussion is informed by our most recent publication in the journal 'Professional Development in Education', 'A Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Continual Professional Learning and Development with Values' in which:

We contend that *professional* practitioner's learning and development requires more than improving skills, knowledge and expertise associated with a field of practice and behaving in accord with the ethical statements of organisations. It requires practitioners to realise their responsibilities to hold themselves to account for the consequences of their practice for human flourishing and contributing to the growth of a global knowledgebase all may benefit from. *Professional* practice is shaped by, and shapes, dynamic, complex ecologies comprised by local, national, and global priorities and cultures. This is of international concern, as illustrated by The United Nations' vision for transforming education, the global vision in a European framework and the values vision of the Magna Charta Universitatum.

We draw on academically rigorous and validated accounts of Living Educational Theory Research created by professional practitioners working in various fields and contexts. We analyse their accounts to illustrate how, by engaging in Living Educational Theory Research as CPD, professional practitioners establish a robust evidence base for policy and practice development, which enhance the learning of individuals and communities to flourish, help others do so too, and contribute to Humanity learning to flourish as a benign present in the world. (Whitehead & Huxtable, Abstract, 2025)

The discussion is also informed by UNESCO (2015) Education 2030 goals:

The renewed education agenda encapsulated in Goal 4 is comprehensive, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal, and inspired by a vision of education that transforms the lives of individuals, communities and societies, ... inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development, based on the principles of human rights and dignity, social justice, peace, inclusion and protection, as well as cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and shared responsibility and accountability. (Education 2015, p.24)

Whilst we subscribe to these values we are also aware of a tension between realising the goals of economic rationality and realising values of human flourishing. Living

Educational Theory Research offers a way of recognising and working with these tensions productively. Tensions between economic rationality and the values of human flourishing are expressed globally in wars and poverty. Living Educational Theory Researchers are engaged in responding to these tensions.

In claiming that professional practice is shaped by, and shapes, dynamic, complex ecologies comprised by local, national, and global priorities and cultures we have provided the evidence to show how living-educational-theories have been generated within such global, complex ecologies. Teacher Educators working within Norway, Bangladesh, the UK and Israeli, are facing issues of poverty and war in the generating and sharing of their living-educational-theories. We believe that all teacher-educators are faced with complex influences of sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in their practice and understandings. We have provided validated, evidence-based and values-laden evidence to justify our claim that a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Global Perspectives in Teacher Education can offer an alternative to the Standard Education Model. Through this discussion we are inviting you to critique our claim and, if you persuaded by our argument, to contribute your own living-poster to the homepage of living-posters (see - <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2023.pdf>) and to contribute a paper to the Educational Journal of Living Theories. (see- <https://ejolts.net/>)

Conclusion

The standard model of teacher education plays a significant role in identifying and transmitting established knowledge to educators. However, its limitations lie in positioning teachers primarily as passive recipients rather than as active creators of knowledge. In contrast, a Living Educational Theory Research approach to education and professional development repositions educators as knowledge-creators who embody and advance values of human flourishing through their practice. This model has the potential to transform both initial teacher education and ongoing professional development by fostering reflective, values-based inquiry that contributes meaningfully to educational knowledge. In a world marked by persistent

violence and poverty, there is an urgent need for educational practices that promote compassion, equity, and sustainability.

We have presented evidence supporting the view that each educator, by critically researching their own practice, can contribute to building a more just and humane world.

Embracing a Living Educational Theory Research Approach offers a pathway to lifelong professional learning, where the values of human flourishing are not only espoused but lived in action.

In closing, we assert that by expanding our intellectual and ethical engagement with global contexts, we can help generate a Living Educational Research approach that informs and enriches teacher education worldwide. This is not merely a pedagogical shift—it is a call to action for educators to be co-creators of a better future.

We are offering a Living Educational Theory Research Approach for a life-time of professional learning and development. The current state of the world, with continued violence and poverty is crying out for a world in which values of human flourishing can be lived more fully. We have presented evidence to support our argument that each one of us can contribute to the creation of a better world by accepting a responsibility as professional practitioners to research our practice, learning and development to realise values of human flourishing as fully as possible. As we extend our cognitive range and concern with an understanding of global contexts of teacher education we are inviting you to test the validity of our claims by creating and making public your own living-educational-theory as a contribution to the generation of a Living Educational Research approach to Global Perspectives in Teacher Education.

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