

Living Educational Theory Research in the Self-Study of Teacher-Education Professional Practices.

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Abstract

This paper is based on two assumptions. The first is that self-study researchers in education should be interested in discovering the educational influences of their professional, educational practices. The second is that Living Educational Theory Research, in the self-study of teacher-education professional practice is generating a new Collective Imaginary for contributing to a more peaceful and productive world.

The paper aims to provide a well-reasoned argument for a Living Educational Theory Research approach to the self-study of Teacher-Education Practice within whatever context locates the practice of the self-study researcher. It makes claims to have created new Collective Imaginary from the self-study of Teacher-Education professional practices and provides the evidence that supports all the knowledge-claims. It critically engages with insights from relevant literature in the creation and validation of living-educational-theories. It makes clear the significance of the paper for the self-study of Teacher-Education Professional practice with values of human flourishing that are constituting a new Collective Imaginary.

Introduction

The research aim is to provide evidence that a Living Educational Theory Research approach, to the professional learning of self-study, teacher-education researchers, has generated original contributions to the global knowledge base of teacher education. The originality includes a unit of appraisal, standards of judgement and logic that determines the rationality of explanations of educational influences in learning.

The theoretical frameworks are provided by the original contributions to knowledge provided in over 50 Living Theory doctorates of self-study researchers who have explored the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. These explanations include insights from other theoretical frameworks such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education.

Methods used include those created by self-study researchers (Tidwell et al., 2009). In addition to these is empathetic resonance with digital visual data developed for Living Educational Theory Research. It enables the clarification and communication of the embodied values used by self-study researchers as explanatory principles in their

explanations of educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the professional practice is located.

Findings are focused on a definition of professionalism that includes both meeting criteria set by the professional's professional body, and the acceptance of a professional responsibility for researching one's own professional learning in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve the educational influences in my professional practice?', and making public the valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning.

Relevance of this paper to ISSAT and S-STEP members, arises from the clarification and communication of a new Collective Imaginary that is grounded in the embodied values of the self-study researchers, which form their evaluative and epistemological standards of judgement and explanatory principles in explanations for their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formation that is the context of the practice. The accounts of living-educational-theories created by teacher educators include and explain connections between quality teaching, equity, and socially just classrooms in the generation of each individual's living-educational-theory.

The goal of the paper is to offer for public criticism, the evidence-based and values-laden argument that Living Educational Theory Research in the Self-Study of Teacher-Education Professional Practices offers a new Collective Imaginary for professionals and educational researchers to use in making their contributions to knowledge with values of human flourishing.

The aim of this research is to provide evidence that a Living Educational Theory Research approach, to the professional learning of self-study, teacher-education researchers, has not only generated original contributions to the global knowledge base of teacher education. It has also provided a new Collective Imaginary for enhancing the flow of values for human flourishing through the generation and sharing of living-educational-theories.

Our objectives include the persuasiveness of our evidence-based and values-laden argument that each Living Educational Theory, self-study researcher generates and shares their own living-theory methodology in the course of generating and sharing their valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanation of 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.

This paper is based on the assumption that professional practitioners, in their self-study of teacher education practices, are continuously asking questions of the kind, 'How do I enhance the educational influences of my professional practices?', researching and answering this kind of question.

The main argument offered is that a Living Educational Theory Research approach to the self-study of teacher education professional practices offers a new Collective Imaginary for enhancing the flow of values of human flourishing through:

- the generation and sharing of living-posters (see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2023.pdf>);
- the generation and sharing of living-educational-theories in public forums such as the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs – see <https://ejolts.net>); and
- the generation and sharing of explanations for educational influences in learning such as the doctoral theses at <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> .

This presentation is organised in terms of:

- Theoretical Frameworks;
- Methodological Approach and Methods;
- Professionalism and Educational Responsibility;
- Findings: Living-Educational-Theories in Practice;
- Relevance to Teacher Education, Social Justice and Developing Collective Imaginaries
- Conclusion and Implications

Theoretical Framework

The generation and sharing of our living-educational-theory is a valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanation of our educational influence in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which our practice is located. As rational human beings we believe that we wish to know the educational influences of what we are doing as teachers, teacher-educators and educational researchers. We want to know this in order to justify what we are doing and to use this know in improving the educational influences of what we are doing. Further more we are assuming that when people care deeply for one another and other living beings, it feels like everything in the world is going wrong, then you're not alone. We find ourselves grappling with a striking paradox: we know that people report placing high importance on universalism and benevolence values and we know that this predicts deeper levels of social and environmental concern; yet progress on social and environmental justice is painfully slow. Indeed - on many fronts – it feels like progress is being unpicked. (Roderiques, et al., 2025).

Because of this paradox we are suggesting that the world needs a new Collective imaginary, in order to response to this paradox, in a way that enhances the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. We agree with Drewell, & Larsson (2019) when they say that:

Generally, we simply cannot see the process of coming-into-being of our social reality. Yet, our collective ability to create social reality is perhaps our most defining human capacity. This social reality is sometimes termed our Collective Imaginary. This is the emergent property of the complex self-organisation of many minds with the capacity for symbolic language, and it is unique to human beings. (p. 64)

In the process of generating and sharing our living-educational-theories we include developing our worldviews through a conscious shift in our Collective Imaginary. In Living Educational Theory Research we see our social reality as something socially constructed and continuously reinforced and subject to modification by our own thinking and acting. Because we do not wish to be complicit in perpetuating the established power structures of

society we are suggesting that we all hold ourselves accountable, through our individual and collective intentions and actions, for our educational influences in the learning of the social reality around us with values of human flourishing.

In his work on the energy paradigm, Vasilyuk (1991, p. 64) points out that:

... we know how 'energetically' a person can act when positively motivated, we know that the meaningfulness of a project lends additional strength to the people engaged in it, but we have very little idea of how to link up into one whole the physiological theory of activation.

Vasyluk also points out that It is not clear to what extent conceptions are merely models of our understanding and to what extent they can be given ontological status.

We are suggesting that our energy-flowing values are ontological in the sense that they are central to what motivates us to do what we do. The energy-flowing values we embody in what we do, and that form explanatory principles in explanations of our educational influences, require clarification. The clarifications can occur in the course of their emergence in practice (Feyerabend, 1975 p. 17). Hence our use of empathetic resonance with digital visual data for clarifying and communicating meanings of energy-flowing, embodied values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity

The theoretical framework of this research into the creation of a new Collective Imaginary is provided by the original contributions of the Living Educational Theory Research doctorates of the self-studies of the professional practices of teacher education by teacher-educators. These teacher-educators have explored the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. The original contributions include a unit of appraisal, standards of judgement and logic that determines the rationality of explanations of educational influences in learning. These explanations include insights from other theoretical frameworks such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education (Bigger, 2021).

Our knowledge of some 50 living-educational-theories, at <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>, provides us with theoretical frameworks from a wide range of global perspective that we draw on in the generation and sharing of a new Collective Imaginary. We also draw insights from Critical Theory in using insights on how sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings influence practice and the generation of explanations of educational influences in learning. In the above publication in the journal of Irish Educational Studies on "Why a focus on 'what is educational?' matters so much in reconstructing education?", we explain the importance of clearly defining what we mean by 'educational'. From Popper's (1975, p. 44) writings on the Philosophy of Science we use his idea that the objectivity of statements are grounded in intersubjective criticism through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. From Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) Theory of Communicative Action we use amendments to his four criteria of social validity, on comprehensibility, evidence, sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings and authenticity, to strengthen the validity of the evidence-based and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning.

Methodological Approach and Methods

Adopting a Living Educational Theory Research approach to their professional development includes self-study teacher educators generating and sharing their valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning. The explanatory principles are values-laden to justify a claim that the explanations are educational. Hence, the embodied values must be clarified and communicated in the course of their emergence in practice. In making any claim to knowledge from research it is important to validate the claim(s). We advocate the use of validation groups between 3-8 peers to subject the explanations to the mutual rational control of critical discussion through focuses questions on the comprehensibility, evidence, sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings and authenticity, of the explanations.

Methods employed include those described by Tidwell et al. (2009) in research for the Self-Study of Practice. These include: the use of Autoethnography; Narrative Inquiry; discourse and dialogue; social justice framing; electronic technologies; visual representation including video, photography and visual metaphor; representations using collage.

The methods also include those described by Whitehead (2009) in a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development. An addition to these methods is empathetic resonance with digital visual data. This was developed for Living Educational Theory Research. It enabled the clarification and communication of the meanings of the embodied values used by self-study researchers, as explanatory principles in their explanations of educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the professional practice is located. Naidoo (2005, pp. 189-190) has provided a clear example of the use of this method in clarifying the meaning of a passion for compassion – See also ‘Meanings of Empathetic Resonance and Validity in Visual Narratives’ (Whitehead, 2010).

Professionalism and Educational Responsibility

We are offering a reconceptualizing professionalism in teacher education based on accepting the dual criteria of the standards of a professional body and the standards of each individual’s educational responsibility for their own professional development. We have set out our arguments elsewhere (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016) for the creating of a profession of educators through the living-educational-theories of Master and Doctor Educators. We have deepened and extended our evidence-based and values-laden arguments in ‘A living educational theory research approach to continual professional learning and development with values’ (Whitehead, & Huxtable, 2025).

Findings: Living-Educational-Theories in Practice

Why should you explain your educational influences in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which your practice is located?’ Our desire to captivate your imagination to ask, research and answer this question is grounded in our belief that in working together we can answer such questions in the

generation and sharing of our living-educational-theories and create a new Collective Imaginary in contributing to enhancing the flow of energy-flowing values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

The findings have significance and relevance to the Conference theme in clarifying and communicating a new collective imaginary from the living-educational-theories of self-study researchers that include and explain connections between quality teaching, equity, and socially just classrooms in the generation of each individual's living-educational-theory.

The findings are focused on a definition of professionalism that includes both meeting criteria set by the professional's professional body, and the acceptance of a professional responsibility for researching one's own professional learning in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve the educational influences in my professional practice?', and making public the valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning. In relation to 'Living Educational Theory Research in the Self-Study of Teacher-Education Professional Practices' the findings take forward those in the above publications the findings go beyond those previously reported in our publications above, through the generation and sharing of a collective imaginary (Drewell & Larsson 2019) that draws on Mounter's (2024) original work on the explanatory principles for explanations of the educational influences in the learning of social formations. A collective imaginary is 'the emergent property of the complex self-organisation of many minds with the capacity for symbolic language, and it is unique to human beings.' (Drewell & Larsson 2019, p.65). We are contributing to the generation and sharing of such a collective imaginary in the support and publication of living-posters at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2023.pdf> .

We are strengthening the collective imaginary we are contributing to, through connecting with the 'Education For Development And Sustainability (Eds) Living Educational Theory Research Group' – see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/eds24.pdf>

EDS is neutral (non-religious, non-political) and open for everyone. They work particularly with vulnerable children and youth and economically poor people. EDS is free, with no tuition fees. Learn more about EDS by visiting their website - <https://www.edsbdo.org>

In our collective imaginary we are developing our understanding of education and sustainable development in work with vulnerable children and youth and economically poor people, with the help of Md Riaz Hawlader's living poster at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/riaz221224.pdf>

Our collective imaginary is also extending through our engagement with the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group (TERG) working on their Living Educational Theory Research at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf>

Our collective imaginary is extending through supporting the publication of a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Peace Education, in the 2025 issue of The Educational Journal of Living Theories at <https://ejolts.net/> .

We recognise that our claim to have created a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development with a new Collective Imaginary will be strengthened by the

explication of the epistemology that validates such a claim to knowledge. Hence we have published our explication of this epistemology (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2024)

Relevance to Teacher Education, Social Justice and Developing Collective Imaginaries

What relevance, to Teacher Education, Social Justice and Developing Collective Imaginaries, does Living Educational Theory Research have in the Self-Study of Teacher-Education Professional Practices?

When we consider the relationships between what we are doing in our local contexts and our contributions to global social formations, we are aware of the major global issues of war and poverty. Hence we are concerned that our Collective Imaginary includes values of human flourishing that focus on contributing to a more peaceful, just and productive world. Hence we hold ourselves accountable in our living-educational-theories, for living embodied values of human flourishing as fully as possible. These values include enhancing socially just classroom practices and developing collective imaginaries that stress contributing to global educational influences in the global knowledgebase of teacher education.

Conclusion and Implications

Through providing the evidence of the history of our professional learning for Huxtable at <http://www.spanglefish.com/mariessite/> and Whitehead at <https://actionresearch.net/writings/writing.shtml> we have sought to bring you up to date with our present concern to clarify and communicate a new Collective. Imaginary for enhancing the flow of the values of human flourishing in the living-educational-theories of self-study teacher educators.

We have proposed a definition of professionalism that includes both meeting criteria set by the professional's professional body, and the acceptance of a professional responsibility for researching one's own professional learning in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve the educational influences in my professional practice?'/ This involves making public the valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations of educational influences in learning.

We are claiming that this new collective imaginary has relevance to the Conference Theme in that the embodied values of the self-study, teacher-education, researchers, include and explain connections between quality teaching, equity, and socially just classrooms in the generation of their living-educational-theory. For example, Whitehead (2022) has focused on cultivating equity and socially just classrooms in a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to his professional development.

We have directed your attention to the data that shows communities of practice of Living Educational Theory Researchers, sharing the development of their Collective Imaginaries as

they seek to live their values of human flourishing in a wide range of global context. This data is accessible from the homepage of living-posters at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2023.pdf> and includes the collective imaginary being generated by the Education for Development and Sustainability Living Educational Theory Research Group at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/eds24.pdf>, and the Indonesian Transformative Education Research Group at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf>

We understand that the new collective imaginary should be relevant to the issues arising in global contexts that relate to the expression and enhancement of flows of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. These values are all the more important given the present focus in the UK of becoming 'battle ready' and on a 'war footing'. Hence we conclude with the link to Joakim Arnoy's (2025) living-educational-theory as a peace educator, in the Educational Journal of Living Theories at <https://web-cdn.org/s/1445/file/node/joakim18-1.pdf>.

During this presentation we have presented an argument for professionalism that goes beyond a practitioner just doing what they are required to do to fulfil their duties to the social formation, which is the context of their practice, and meet the requirements of a professional/regulatory body. We have argued that a professional practitioner as well as developing skills, knowledge and expertise also accepts responsibility to continually study their own practice to understand and improve the educational, values-laden influence of their practice, test the validity of the knowledge they create, and contribute it to the evolution of a global educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all.

We went on to make the case for professional practitioners to engage in Living Educational Theory Research as continual professional development. We provide support from the literature for the assertion that Living Educational Theory Research is well established as a transformative professional practitioner educational research methodology and paradigm, and epistemologically and practically significant. As educators engage in Living Educational Theory Research to create their living-educational-theories they participate in the co-creation of inclusive, emancipating, socially just, equitable and sustainable futures.

We have drawn on some of the many doctoral theses, accredited by universities around the world, and published papers, to show how educators, by adopting a Living Educational Theory Research approach to their continual professional development, have realised their educational responsibilities as professional practitioners and address the practical challenges of creating inclusive, sustainable learning environments. Values of human flourishing form the bedrock of a practitioner's claim that their practice is educational (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2021).

We have drawn your attention to the method of empathetic resonance with digital visual data for enabling the clarification and communication of the embodied meaning of values of human flourishing used by self-study researchers as explanatory principles. We have shown how these principles are used in their explanations for educational influences in their own

learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which their professional practice is located.

Lastly, we have provided evidence to demonstrate that a Living Educational Theory Research approach, to the professional learning of self-study, teacher-education researchers, has provided a new Collective Imaginary for enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of human in the creation and sharing of living-educational-theories. The knowledge generated constitutes original contributions to the global knowledge base of teacher education.

We bring the presentation to a conclusion by inviting you, as a self-study, teacher education researcher, who takes their responsibilities as a professional practitioner seriously:

- To explore <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2023.pdf>

There you will find practitioners working in diverse fields and contexts developing educational, values-laden knowledge, theory, practice and opportunities that contribute to systemic change for the flourishing of humanity. We hope you might create and contribute your own living-poster so others can find and connect with you – and help others do so too.

- Begin to create an account of your living-educational-theory, help others do so too, and contribute the knowledge you generate to the global growth of knowledge by submitting it to a peer-reviewed journal such as the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs). EJOLTs is on the DOAJ and other databases and is a completely free open access online, journal. Visit <https://ejolts.net/> for details, resources and support.

To continue the conversation just begun, please contact us at
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