

Using action research with living educational theories to improve practice and to generate knowledge.

A British Council sponsored workshop with Jack Whitehead, Visiting Professor, University of Cumbria, UK.

11-13 November at the Hotel Podgorica, Podgorica, Montenegro



34:56 minute video from the last session of the workshop on the 13th November 2013
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1fcExyiTk0>

Workshop Description:

The purpose of the workshop to enable participants to carry out an educational enquiry into improving practice through understanding the fundamental principles of action research. The enquiries will be located within the processes of setting goals, identifying strategies to meet those goals and tracking which strategies are working for participants and adjusting accordingly. Within the enquiries there will be a focus on action planning, on evaluating the educational influence of the actions on their own, their students' and their colleagues' learning and on the importance of sharing evidence-based explanations of learning.

The workshop will begin with an exploration of the participants' contextual understandings of the opportunities and constraints on their enquiries into improving their practice with such questions as 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

Living educational theories are the explanations produced by participants to explain their educational influences in their own learning in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation of the school. The workshop will include details of the free access to all the resources available from <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

Pre-reading. It would be helpful if participants would study, before the workshop, the following practitioner-researcher reports:

Branko Bognar (2013) *Initiating teachers' action research: Empowering teachers' voices*. Educational Journal of Living Theories, 6(1); 1-39, <http://ejolts.net/node/202>

Sanja Vidović & Verica Kuharić Bučević (2013) *The enhancement of creativity in Technical Education*. Educational Journal of Living Theories, 6(1); 57-85, <http://ejolts.net/node/204>

Joy Mounter (2008) *Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?* MA unit on Understanding Learners and Learning at the University of Bath. Retrieved 26 September 201 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>

You can access the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) at:

<http://ejolts.net>

	Morning	Afternoon
Mon 11 Nov	<p>What constitutes an educational enquiry with action research into your educational influences in your own learning, the learning of pupils and in the learning of colleagues?</p> <p>This session will focus on formulating a personal action enquiry (this may be an individual or group enquiry) using the action planner from Appendix 1 of http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arplanner.htm.</p> <p>There will also be an initial focus on producing short pieces of autobiographical writing to help you to locate your enquiries in your particular contexts and to explain the unique constellation of values which provide your professional motivations.</p>	<p>Sharing the anecdotes of the experiences that reveal the values that are motivating you to improve your practice.</p> <p>Explaining how the process of creating your own living educational theory, as an explanation of your educational influence, can transform anecdotes into rigorous and valid explanations that are significant contributions to knowledge.</p>
Tues 12 Nov	<p>Formulating and Carrying Out an Action Enquiry</p> <p>A draft of participants' action enquiry 'design' will be a focus for group discussion. Questions will be raised about the feasibility of the enquiries and about the kind of data which will need to be gathered to enable</p>	<p>This will focus on sharing evidence concerning claims to know educational influences in learning which emerge from the enquiries. Questions of validity, justification and rigour will be raised, especially those informed by multi-media narratives of practice. Drafts of participant's enquiries will form the basis</p>

	participants to make judgments on the quality and effectiveness of their enquiry and their influence in improving practice.	for triangulated self/peer/tutor assessment. .
Wed 13 Nov	<p>The focus will now change from the individual's enquiry learning, to their cultural and organisational influences in supporting the action research of others, including students, in improving their practice and generating knowledge.</p> <p>The focus will be on living educational theory research as transformational continuing professional development within schools with the text from a 2013 issue of Gifted Education International at:</p> <p>http://www.actionresearch.net/jack/jwmhGEIarticle141012.pdf</p>	<p>The focus of the afternoon session will be on forming and sustaining school-based research groups to enhance the continuing professional development of teachers in improving their own learning and the learning of students. Delong's research will be used to show how to create of a culture of inquiry for teachers' continuing professional development for masters accreditation informed by action research. This will be related to an international, continuing professional development project.</p>

Strengthening the Validity of your living-educational theories

Creating valid explanations of your educational influences in your own learning and in the learning of others, takes time. In my experience living-theory action research writings for a masters unit can usually take some 20 weeks. You can see such writings at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>

A full masters degree can be accomplished in 2 years and a living-theory doctorate can be accomplished part-time in a minimum of 5 years. See: <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>

In validation groups of between 3-8 peers I advocate the use of four questions, derived from the work of Habermas (1976 pp2-3) to enhance validity:

- i) How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation of educational influence in learning?
- ii) How can I strengthen the evidence in my explanation to justify the assertions (claims to know) I make?
- iii) How can I deepen and extend the understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences on my practice and writings, in my explanation?
- iv) How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation over time and interaction to show that I am truly committed to the values I claim to hold?

Habermas, J. (1976) Communication and the evolution of society. London : Heinemann

Leader: Jack Whitehead



Jack Whitehead worked as a lecturer in Education at the University of Bath between 1973-2009. He is an Adjunct Professor at Liverpool Hope University until February 2014 and a Visiting Professor at the University of Cumbria. His main professional achievements are in the field of living-educational-theory and action research to improve learning and generate knowledge. He is a former president of the British Educational Research Association and Distinguished Scholar in Resident at Westminster College, Utah. He is a Visiting Professor at Ningxia Teachers University in China. The resources on his web-site <http://www.actionresearch.net> are freely available and are being used all over the world by practitioner-researchers in improving their practice and in creating their own living educational theories.