How does the constraining power of education researchers influence the emergence of educational knowledge and theory?

DRAFT 06/03/14

1.   Purposes

The presentation fulfils three purposes.

i) The first is to make a clear stipulative distinction between education researchers and educational researchers.

Education researchers make contributions to education knowledge through their information gathering and theory construction and testing within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of forms and fields of education research.

In my initial introduction to educational theory, during my initial teacher education course (1966-67), I was influenced by reading Ethics and Education by R. S. Peters (1966) and the disciplines approach to educational theory. This approach held that educational theory was constituted by the disciplines of education of the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. In this approach to the professional development of teachers, their practical problems were to be broken down into separate components. These components were then to be addressed in terms of the separate disciplines before being integrated back into the resolution of the practical problems. The print-based Journals of Education as well as the print-based Journals of the American and British Educational Research Association continue to be dominated by contributions from adherents to one or more of the disciplines of education as if the disciplines of education constitute educational research and educational theory. Because of the mistake in the disciplines approach to educational theory considered below I make the following distinction between education and educational researchers who are exploring questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

These educational researchers make contributions to educational knowledge by generating explanations of the educational influences of individuals and groups in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they live, work and research. I refer to these explanations as living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1989).

There is a fundamental difference between the way in which explanations are produced by education researchers and those educational researchers who are creating their living-educational-theories. The explanations of education researchers are usually **derived** from the abstract, general theories of a discipline of education and applied to a particular case. The explanatory principles in living-educational-theories **are not derived** from abstract, general theories. **They are generated** from the ontological values that practitioners use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. They are clarified and communicated through their emergence in practice in an educational enquiry. These explanatory principles often include insights from the disciplines of education but are not derived from their theories.

The theories of disciplines of education can be distinguished by their conceptual frameworks and methods of validation. Living-educational-theories are distinguished by the unique constellation of ontological values, and insights from the disciplines, that each individual uses as explanatory principles in their explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which the enquiry is located.

I am also emphasising that not all educational research has to be concerned with generating living-educational-theories in that not all educational research will be focused on generating explanations of educational influences in learning. However, for research to be educational, I am suggesting that it must include both learning and values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

I am assuming that the American Educational Research Association, along with the British Educational Research Association is primarily concerned with Educational Research as distinct from other forms of research. My anxieties about the colonisation of Educational Research by Education Researchers can be appreciated by the way in which another former President of the British Educational Research Association seeks to use the term education research to characterise the whole field and to reserve the term educational research for work that is consciously geared to improving policy and practice. Whitty (2005) goes so far as to say that it is worth considering changing the name of BERA to stand for the British Education Research Association:

> One way of handling the distinction might be to use the terms 'education research' and 'educational research' more carefully. In this paper, I have so far used the broad term education research to characterise the whole field, but it may be that within that field we should reserve the term educational research for work that is consciously geared towards improving policy and practice….. One problem with this distinction between 'education research' as the broad term and 'educational research' as the narrower field of work specifically geared to the improvement of policy and practice is that it would mean that BERA, as the British Education<u>al</u> Research Association would have to change its name or be seen as only involved with the latter. So trying to make the distinction clearer would also involve BERA in a re-branding exercise which may not necessarily be the best way of spending our time and resources. But it is at least worth considering. (p. 172-173)

I have experienced, in both AERA and BERA publications, the dominance of the language of education researchers which brings me to my second purpose.

ii) Showing the dominance of the language of education research, in the calls for papers for AERA 2012-14.

The significance of this domination can be appreciated in terms of a mistake made in the disciplines approach to educational theory. In the disciplines approach, educational theory was held to be constituted by the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. In 1983 Paul Hirst, one of the proponents of the disciplines approach acknowledged the following mistake:

> Much understanding of educational theory will be developed:

"… in the context of immediate practical experience and will be co-terminous with everyday understanding. In particular, many of its operational principles, both explicit and implicit, will be of their nature generalisations from practical experience and have as their justification the results of individual activities and practices.

In many characterisations of educational theory, my own included, principles justified in this way have until recently been regarded as at best pragmatic maxims having a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more fundamental, theoretical justification. That now seems to me to be a mistake. Rationally defensible practical principles, I suggest, must of their nature stand up to such practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate."
(Hirst, 1983, p. 18)

The mistake was in replacing the practical principles of practitioners by the principles of the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. I want to make it very clear at this point that I value insights from the disciplines of education in the generation of my own living-educational-theory. However, I am claiming that the colonization of educational research by education researchers is continuing the tradition of the disciplines approach to educational theory in which the practical principles used by practitioners to explain their educational influences in learning continue to be replaced by abstract principles drawn from the disciplines of education.

This dominance of education research can be seen in the slippage between education and educational research in the Themes for the 2013-2014 AERA conferences and in the journal Educational Researcher.

This brings me to my third purpose in an exploration of the implications of this dominance.

iii) Exploring the implications of this dominance in terms of the constraining power of education researchers to influence the emergence of educational knowledge and theory from educational researchers.

The constraining power of education researchers can be appreciated in the publications of AERA, especially in Jan/Feb 2014 issue of Educational Researcher with the special section on *'What should count as quality education research in education? Continuing the discussion'* (Southerland, Gadsden & Herrington, 2014):

This special section is directed to a continuing conversation as to what counts as quality research in education. For any field of science and scholarship, serious reflection on the elements of transparent and well-warranted research merits ongoing attention. In this section, that dialogue is extended to further exploring what constitutes "high-quality" research. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) formally addressed some of these issues in issuing "Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Sciences Research in AERA Publications" in 2006, followed by issuing a second set of standards in 2009 focused on humanities-orientated research. Continuing to engage with

such questions reflects the editorial team's premise: that high-quality research should be fundamental to the improvement of educational policy and practice.

The Search for Criteria of Quality in Research

The commentaries in this special section respond to the continuing need to define within our various academic and research communities the criteria of rigor so that we can be better positioned to share these criteria with other communities, including policymakers and educators. They also point to the importance of understanding how policy decisions shape research that is conducted in education. Assessments of what constitutes rigorous research shape what policy makers choose to support, what educational researchers hold as valuable, and what educational practitioners choose to implement. (p. 7)

The slippage between education and educational research, as distinct forms of research for generating different kinds of knowledge, can be seen in the above statements that can connect with Whitty's reduction of educational research to matters of policy and practice, rather than emphasising the educational knowledge-creation of educational researchers. The statements above refer to what counts as high quality research in education, not to what counts as high quality educational research. The statements refer to high-quality (education) research 'should be fundamental to the improvement of educational policy and practice'. I am suggesting that the focus should be on high-quality educational research being fundamental to the improvement of educational policy, practice and educational knowledge.

A similar focus on education research rather than educational research can be seen in the Theme for AERA 2013 on Education and Poverty: Theory, Research, Policy and Praxis with its focus on considering how 'education research can contribute to alleviating poverty':

> Poverty interacts with education through local, national, and international systems of financial markets and the global knowledge economy. The interdependencies embodied in globalization and the deep inequities created and maintained by globalization play a substantial role in the lives of marginalized communities and the educational organizations that serve them. We are eager to engage scholars from around the world in considering how education research can contribute to alleviating poverty and how academics might be complicit in maintaining class structures. We seek to understand better the role of local efforts to alleviate proverty through education interact- or do not - with international assessment efforts (e.g., PISA, TIMMS, IEA)…

> We seek papers and symposia that offer theoretical analyses as well as research-based arguments about education and poverty. We desire studies about how educational policies and practices might reduce poverty, as well as proposals that investigate why educational policies and practices often fail to address poverty. We seek papers that introduce new methods for analyzing education and poverty. Our own assumption is that as educators we have an obligation to work with one another in a manner that enables not merely analysis, but also transformative change. (AERA, 2013)

Again, the references to educational policies and practices are focused on education research, with no mention of the educational knowledge generating capacities of educational researchers.

The slippage between education and educational research is contributing to the colonization of educational research by education researchers and contributing to a failure of the American Educational Research Association to fulfil its responsibility as an **Educational** Research Association.

The failure is as serious as that perpetrated by the disciplines approach to educational theory. The practical principles of educational researchers continue to be replaced by the conceptual abstractions of education researchers.

I shall now focus on educational research that transcends this colonization and failure to express the responsibilities of educational researchers.

2.0   Perspective(s)

In his AERA Presidential Address, Eisner (1993) explained the need to extend the forms of representation used in educational research. Eisner had previously argued for the primacy of experience and the politics of method (1988) in educational research and later analysed the problems and perils of alternative forms of data presentation (1997) in educational research. Eisner included visual data in his presentation and pointed out that the majority of academic journals of education were restricted to printed-text and hence too limited to include some of the forms of representation he used in his presentation. Later in this presentation I shall use a multi-media narrative to communicate the meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. I shall argue that multi-media narratives can transcend some of the limitations in using only printed text in communicating the meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values in explanations of educational influence. My emphasis on influence owes much to Said's (1997) quote from Valery's "Letter About Mallarme".

> No word comes easier or oftener to the critic's pen than the word influence, and no vaguer notion can be found among all the vague notions that compose the phantom armory of aesthetics. Yet there is nothing in the critical field that should be of greater philosophical interest or prove more rewarding to analysis than the progressive modification of one mind by the work of another. (p. 15)

I also use the following perspectives in generating living-educational-theories as an educational researcher who is generating explanations of educational influences in learning.

I use Polanyi's (1958) perspective on personal knowledge in my decision to understand the world from my own point of view, as an individual, claiming originality and exercising judgment, responsibly with universal intent (p. 327). In taking this decision I focus on exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering the question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Such questions are also at the heart of the Transformative Education(al) Studies (2011) project in South

Africa with the generic question, 'How do I transform my educational practice as…..?'. My emphasis on the generation of educational knowledge can also be understood in terms of a commitment to contribute to enhancing professionalism in education through the generation of educational knowledge that can explain the educational influences of individuals in their own learning and in the learning of others as well as in the learning of the social formations in which the enquiries are located. Such contributions to enhancing professional can also be understood in terms of Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, Shimoni and Golan's (2013) focus on teacher educators as members of an evolving profession.

Given my criticism of the colonization of educational research by education researchers I do not want to be misunderstood as rejecting the knowledge generated by education researchers. I value and use insights from education researchers, in the creation of educational knowledge with living-educational-theories. What I am very critical of is the way in which education researchers control the discourses in the publications of the American Educational Research Association. They do this at the expense of fulfilling the responsibility of AERA for Educational Research.

I wish to emphasize that I have benefitted from criticisms of education researchers. For example, the late Susan Noffke (1997, p. 329) highlighted the need for living-educational-theories to address social issues in terms of the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society. This helped to focus my attention on bringing sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings into explanations of educational influence in validating these explanations, as I describe below, when considering a method of social validation.

Perhaps the most significant perspective in justifying the rationality of the argument put forward in this presentation is the living-logic (Whitehead, 2008, 2013) that distinguishes this rationality from those defined by either propositional or dialectical logics. I am using Marcuse's viewpoint that logic is a mode of thinking that is appropriate for comprehending the real as rational (Marcuse, 1964, p. 105).

41:31 minute video at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4xIg3E5Vt0

This video shows me introducing my idea of a living logic for educational research, to a session of the Philosophy of Education Special Interest Group of the British Educational Research Association, on the 5th September 2013 at the University of Sussex.

3.   Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry

The mode of educational inquiry I advocate in generating a living-educational-theory is grounded in the researcher's methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 2001). This emphasises the importance of recognising that a living-theory-methodology (Whitehead, 2008) is an emergent methodology that is clarified and evolved in the course of the inquiry:

> But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes. (p. 166, 2001)

Action reflection cycles can be used in forming, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' The cycles include: the expression of concerns when values are not being lived as fully as the practitioner-researcher believes to be possible; imagining possible improvements; choosing one to act on; acting and gathering data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of actions; evaluating the effectiveness of actions; modifying the concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations and producing an explanation of learning that is submitted to a validation group to help to strengthen the validity of the explanation (Whitehead, 1976).

The technique for developing explanations of educational influence involves the use of visual representations of practice with digital video. The methods for clarifying and communicating the meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles include the process of empathetic resonance with visual data (Huxtable, 2009).

The technique for strengthening the validity of research accounts involves the use by validation groups of questions derived from Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) four criteria of comprehensibility, rightness, truth and authenticity. These include:

i) How could I enhance the comprehensibility of the account?

ii) How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify the assertions (knowledge-claims) I make?

iii) How could I deepen and extend my understanding of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my practice and my writings?

iv) How could I improve the authenticity of my account in showing over time and interaction that I am truly commitment to living as fully as I can, the values I claim to hold?

4.   **Data sources, evidence, objects or materials**

The theme for AERA 2014 on "The Power of Education Research for Innovation in Practice and Policy", emphasises the point being made in this presentation on the colonizing influences of education research on educational research. The power relations, such as those embodied in the publication power of AERA, serve to sustain the hegemony of the knowledge generated by education research as a constraint on the legitimation of new forms of educational knowledge such as those being generated in multi-media narratives (see- the contents of the December 2013 issue of EJOLTS below)

Consider the paper on Professional Development Research: Consensus, Crossroads and Challenges by Hill, Beisiegel and Jacob (2013) in the December 2013 issue of Educational Researcher:

> This article suggests a new approach to research on professional development. This approach is based on the idea that scholars should execute more rigorous comparisons of professional development design elements *at the initial stages* of program development. The designs compared must be carefully linked to open questions within the professional development literature, allowing the field to effectively accumulate evidence on issues of importance to local providers. (p. 476)

Contrast this approach, with its focus on 'literature', with the contents of the December 2013 issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS):

Contents:

Foreword (pp. i-vii)
Moira Laidlaw http://ejolts.net/node/210

Introduction to living theory action research in a culture of inquiry transforms learning in elementary, high school and post-graduate settings (pp. 1-11)
Elizabeth Campbell, Jacqueline Delong, Cathy Griffin & Jack Whitehead
 http://ejolts.net/node/211

Evolving a living-educational-theory within the living boundaries of cultures-of-inquiry (pp. 12-24)
Jack Whitehead http://ejolts.net/node/212

Transforming teaching and learning through living-theory action research In a culture-of-inquiry (pp. 25-44)
Jacqueline Delong http://ejolts.net/node/213

The heART of learning: Creating a loving culture-of-inquiry to enhance self-determined learning in a high school classroom (pp. 45-61)
Elizabeth Campbell http://ejolts.net/node/214

Transforming teaching and learning practice by inviting students to become evaluators of my practice (pp. 62-77)

Cathy Griffin http://ejolts.net/node/215

The significance of living-theory action research in a culture of inquiry transforms learning in elementary, high school and post-graduate settings (pp. 78-96)
Jacqueline Delong, Cathy Griffin, Elizabeth Campbell & Jack Whitehead
http://ejolts.net/node/216

Educational Research continues to publish articles, in a solely printed text-based medium with some still images. In the December 2013 issue, professional development research, is based on the idea that:

> … scholars should execute more rigorous comparisons of professional development design elements *at the initial stages* of program development. The designs compared must be carefully linked to open questions within the professional development literature… (Hill, Beisiegel and Jacob, 2013, p. 476)

The focus is on linking to open questions **within the professional development literature** – the very literature that is limited by its printed text-based forms of representation.

This approach to professional development research can be contrasted with the above contents of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS).

The professional development research in EJOLTS is not grounded in the professional development literature. It is grounded in the multi-media explanations that individual practitioners produce for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they work, live and research, in their ongoing professional development in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing? These explanations use insights from a range of literature, including professional development literature and theories of education researchers.

Evidence, objects and materials that support a living-educational-theory approach to professional development research have been legitimated in masters dissertations and doctoral theses from the UK, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Israel, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Norway and Japan. These are publically available and can be accessed from the internet. Many of these can be accessed from:

http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml

and

http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml

Evidence of some of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences that can serve to transform the living 'I' questions of educational researchers into a conceptual, abstract and propositional forms of knowledge and theory of education researchers also exists in relation to:

i) the Transformatory Education(al) Studies (2013) Project in South Africa – See - http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera12/jwdiscussantTESatAERA12.pdf

ii) a contribution to the Journal, 'Studying Teacher Education' – See – http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jwselfstudyjournal1109.pdf

iii) a contribution to the 6th International Conference on Teacher Education in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 4-6 July 2013, see - http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/Israel040713.pdf

Materials on cultural influences in promoting educational inquiries that engage with the power relations sustaining the hegemony of education research include videoed presentations in workshops and keynotes in:

Thailand : http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/thaischedulemay2013.pdf

Mauritius : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkrnVEvHNXg

Israel: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0IvF0NcLdE and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgv6ghntboo

These include engagements with power relations in the formation, implementation and evaluation of national policies on teacher education and can also be accessed from the What's New section of http://www.actionresearch.net .

5. **Results and substantiated conclusions**

This educational inquiry has provided explanations of educational influences in learning that are **generated** from the educational practices of individual educational researchers. These explanations are distinct from the explanations of education researchers, that are **derived** from the general concepts of propositional and dialectical theories of disciplines of education and applied to particular cases. The explanations referred to in this study have been legitimated by the Academy as making original and significant contributions to educational knowledge and educational theory. These living-educational-theories included insights from education research and it is these insights, mediated by educational researcher and other practitioners, in practice, that explain the power of education research for innovation in policy and practice.

The explanations show how the generation of the living educational theories of educational researchers can integrate insights from the theories of education researchers in a way that sustains a connection with, improving practice, generating knowledge and engaging with policy formation, its implementation and evaluation.

The substantiated conclusions in the living-theory theses include alternative forms of representing valid explanations of educational influences in learning, than solely printed text-based media. The evidence of these alternative forms of representation included inquiries in Elementary, High School and Graduate settings in the December

2013 issue of EJOLTS. It included evidence of educational influence for innovation in policy and practice in the context of classrooms, schools and school systems. It included evidence of educational influences of educational researchers in international contexts in Asia, Australia, South Africa, Israel, Europe and the Americas. The evidence was presented in digital, multi-media narratives much of which is publically available from http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml .

The conclusions included a recognition of the limitations of the propositional and dialectical logics of education researchers in structuring valid explanations of the educational influences in the learning of individual practitioners that is motivated by values that carry hope for the present and future flourishing of humanity.

6.   Scholarly significance.

The presentation has justified the claim that educational researchers have made original and significant contributions to educational knowledge in mediating the power of education research for both constraining and supporting innovation in practice and policy. Education researchers can propose innovations in policy and practice. However, these innovations in practice, suggested by education researchers, require the mediation of educational researchers or other practitioners for the innovations to be put into practice. Researching such innovations in practice in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' can generate, in living-educational-theories, original contributions to educational knowledge.

The presentation can also be seen as a response to Schön's (1995) call for the development of a new epistemology for the new scholarship in demonstrating how the embodied knowledge of professional educators can be made public through digital, multi-media narratives. It answers Snow's (2001, p. 9) call for procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public. The new epistemology uses the unit of appraisal as the individual's explanation for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which the research is located. The epistemology uses embodied expressions of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in the explanations of educational influence. These values are ontological in the sense that they give meaning and purpose to the individual's life in education. The epistemology also makes explicit a living logic for making sense of the explanations of educational researchers of their explanations of educational influences in learning.

The scholarly significance is also demonstrated in the knowledge created by educational researchers in their validated explanations of educational influence. These explanations show how educational environments can be transformed in improving education and serving the public good through improving practice and policy within a culture of inquiry (Delong, 2002; Whitehead & Delong, 2014). These explanations included understandings of the constraints and opportunities related to the sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts in which the educational researcher is located. In evaluating the validity of these explanations new living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) and explanatory principles have been introduced, including the energy-flowing, relational, and inclusional values of educational researchers whose inquiries are taking place in a range of international contexts. Hence the global significance of the educational enquiries in terms of policy, practice and the

generation of educational knowledge.

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