

**Framing our AERA 2022 Symposium:
Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living
Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry**

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(With Jack Whitehead, Michelle Vaughn, Parbati Dhungana and Swaroop Rawal)

Longitudinal Influence: A living process

First, I intend to place this research in the context of longitudinal studies most recently from 2015 to 2022. From the 2015 Town Hall meeting (DeLong et al. 2015) to this symposium we have developed ideas, especially in relation to virtual communications with digital technologies, from the 8th May 2015 ARNA Town Hall meeting in Toronto, to this AERA symposium on April 22, 2022.

The intent of the 2015 Town Hall meeting (DeLong et al. 2015), was to engage practitioner-researchers across the globe as face-to-face and virtual attendees in a living-culture-of-inquiry. The engagement focused on values-based dialogues in creating and sharing living-educational-theories (explanations of our educational influence). In preparation for the session, participants created visual representations of their research in the form of e-posters for location on the EJOLTS site – see <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/arnaposters270415.pdf>.

Multi-screen SKYPE conversations were shown to be influencing our perceptions of the idea that ‘I am because we are/we are because I am’ or i~we for shorthand. The multi-screen conversations enabled us to ‘pool’ our life-affirming and life-enhancing energies, as well as sharing and evolving our relationally dynamic, culture of inquiry and Living Educational Theory research:

In the following video, you see first the group in Toronto, Canada and then Swaroop Rawal from India sharing her excitement in joining the group. Keep in mind that it is 3:00 am her time.



11:47 minute video at <https://youtu.be/2VH6aEUHTDI>

Swaroop says:

“I’m so excited to be with you. I can see you all so clear. I am working in drama in education to enhance life skills in children. Right now I am working in villages, training primary school teachers how to use drama in education in the curriculum and life skills enhancement.”

Next, at the Assembly for Knowledge Democracy of June 2017, Whitehead presented a paper on behalf of DeLong and Huxtable (Whitehead, et al., 2017) on the ‘Participation and Democratization of Knowledge: Living Theory research for Reconciliation from ARNA 2015-ARNA 2017’. This presentation (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtr2wEg971E>)

In our 2017 presentation, we focused on our emerging understandings of knowledge democracy with convergences among those creating knowledge. We demonstrated how Living Educational Theorists draw on diverse approaches including living-cultures-of-inquiry, participatory frameworks, narrative inquiry, self-study and various forms of action research processes. Data from epistemologies of the South, East-Asia and the West were analysed and used to show the mutual exclusion of different forms of rationality by Western Academic Traditions. In contrast to this exclusion, expressed as ‘epistemicide’ by de Sousa Santos (2014), the living-logics of Living Educational Theory researchers were used to show how different knowledges can be reconciled to contribute to the evolution of knowledge democracy for the flourishing of humanity without denying the rationality of a different perspective.

Multi-media narratives with digital visual data, from a range of professional and community practices, were used to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of ontological and relational life-affirming values. These values were used as explanatory principles in the explanations of individuals of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings. We call these explanations living-educational-theories

(Whitehead, 1989).

We have continued to evolve the ideas we presented at the 2017 Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy. The most recent evolution can be seen in two successful Symposium proposals for presentation at the 2021 and 2022 conferences of the American Educational Research Association (DeLong, et al. 2021 & 2022). The presentations are focused on accepting educational responsibility and contributing to equitable education systems in our contributions to knowledge democracy and an ecology of knowledges.

In our 2021 AERA, virtual presentations from Canada, India, USA, Nepal and the UK on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in global contexts', we explored the implications for improving our educational practices, and contributing to educational knowledge, of accepting educational responsibility in building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in their local and global contexts.

We are participating in a global social movement of educational researchers who are engaged in asking, researching and answering, 'How do I, individually and in cooperation with others, enhance the difference Living Educational Theory research can make in a community concerned with extending human flourishing?' Each researcher is moved by unique constellations of values that are used to explain their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence their practices and understanding.

Our global context: Russian invasion of Ukraine

While it may seem difficult for us as researchers, some distance from the site of the war, to contribute, we are cognizant of the way in which our intentions, of influencing the flourishing of humanity and inequities, are limited by our context, we feel the pain. Jack writes:

Being able to enhance educational influences in our own contexts with Living Educational Theory research whilst in other contexts, such as Ukraine and Afghanistan, inequities between education systems are being increased, is our global reality. Whilst we are continuing, within our own social contexts, to contribute to the generation of equitable education systems, this very contribution is increasing inequities between education systems in the global contexts we have described. (p. 21)

In Parbati 's analysis,

...the ongoing war (February-March 2022) between Russia and Ukraine made me re-think the issue of in/equitable professional practices to be looked at situated in the historical context including the cultural, political, social, and educational. I think the war in the outside world is the projection or reflection of the inner worlds: the war, inequity, or imbalance of human consciousness (logicality and intuitiveness) or vice versa that we inherit to some extent.

In the historical context, division and in the teacher's professional development context developing a sense of divisiveness (e.g. with students) are the inequitable practices that can be addressed by attaining and nurturing harmony. Our collaborative undertakings identified shared values (equity) and I~we approach within trans-institutional and transgenerational (Sullivan et al., 2022), including transcultural and transdisciplinary educational virtual space , which may contribute to dismantling inequity and assuring equity and social justice. (p. 31)

On the other hand, Swaroop continues to have a positive influence in India:

Dr Swaroop Sampat-Rawal has been appointed to the National Focus Group to write the position papers for the new school curriculum – the first time it has been re-written in more than 35 years.

“We have a new education policy just released,” said Dr Sampat-Rawal. “The last time the curriculum was written for India was in 1986. I am honoured to have been selected as one of around 100 educators chosen from the thousands and thousands of educators, academics etc from all over India to work on this.”

She has since dedicated herself to community development and advocacy, travelling across India training teachers, while also campaigning to get more children, such as those in tribal communities or street children, into the classroom.

She recently delivered 75 workshops in 17 States to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Indian independence (see <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/news/2022-university-of-worcester-alumna-chosen-to-help-write-indias-new-school-curriculum>)

Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry': our 2022 contributions

In our 2022 presentations, from the same global contexts as the 2021 presentations, we focus on 'Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry' (DeLong et al., 2022). We explore the implications for improving our educational practices and contributing to a global educational knowledgebase as we participate in a global social movement of educational researchers who are engaged in asking, researching and answering, 'How do I, in our Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry, enhance the influence of Living Educational Theory research on cultivating equitable education systems for the 21st Century?' In our culture of inquiry using ZOOM, we are co-learners in our quest to find ways to make learning in our contexts more equitable by each of us researching our practice and using our values as explanatory principles:

In the planning meeting of Monday 17th January 2022, the dialogue included information from Swaroop Rawal about her activities in influencing school curricula within an Indian context with her understandings of life-skills education and value of

equity. Parbati Dhungana made explicit, in the dialogue, some intentions for her research, and mentioned the Eastern idea of Chakras in relation to our focus on a flow of life-affirming energy in the relationships between us. We are also aware of the Chinese notion of Chi to express a life-affirming energy.



24:42 minute video at <https://youtu.be/MbR2s6nWLZU>

The shared expressions around this focus of 21:01 minutes clarifies and communicates our meanings of a flow of life-affirming energy within our culture of inquiry.

Following Ramos and Rowell (2017) we share meanings of knowledge democracy and ecology of knowledges. An ecology of knowledges is a way of holding diversity in knowledge that supports the growth and integrity of the whole. An ecology of knowledges gives us the opportunity to forge a new field of coherences in recognising the value of, but moving beyond, scientific materialist empiricism. As different knowledge systems interact, they can learn from these interplays. Instead of disintegration between competing reality claims, an ecology of knowledges leads to new possibilities of integration. The name for this new orientation is Knowledge Democracy.

Our understandings of knowledge democracy and ecology of knowledges have emerged in several dialogic and written iterations of attempting to fully comprehend their meanings. In particular Delong (2017) has written 'Respecting and Legitimizing The Embodied Knowledge of Practitioners In Contexts of Power Struggles.' We are on the same wavelength as Rowell when he writes:

I understood that to embrace epistemological diversity requires unlearning as well as learning and that enacting practice-based initiatives grounded in knowledge democratization requires creativity and openness to change (e.g., Rowell & Hong, 2017) (Rowell, 2022).

All the participants in the symposium are exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering their questions, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' within their particular cultural contexts, whilst also relating to the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity as global citizens. They are using dialogue as a research method in their contributions to developing cultures of inquiry. These contributions include their living-educational-theories

with values of human flourishing.

All the participants recognise the importance of researching within and contributing to a culture of inquiry with the qualities defined by Delong (2022). We have provided digital visual data, from our planning conversations for this symposium at AERA 2022, to clarify and communicate what we are meaning by the shared expression of a life-affirming energy within our culture of inquiry. Each participant has also shared their evidence-based explanation of how they are contributing to 'Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry' (see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/aera2022sessionprop.pdf>)

Let us review each individual contribution:

1. **Michelle Vaughan (2022)**. Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a USA/global context.

In our culture of inquiry, Michelle Vaughan (2022) focused on improving her connections with her online graduate students by asking them questions and responding to them by increasing opportunities for them to connect with her:

The ideas discussed in this paper are focused on creating equity in online learning, however, I would argue that the significance in these ideas and the true goal is to create equity-minded humans through modeling what authentic caring and love can look and feel like. A classroom is an opportunity to teach and learn, but it is not limited to academic content. Repeatedly, research tells us that the relationship between teacher and student is a powerful conduit for learning. Yet, we push the content to the top of our priority list as educators and think about our connection to students as an afterthought. My own core values and mission as an educator ask me to consider “connection first, content second” in my decision-making and the data shared in this paper illustrate that online students are asking for similar consideration p. 13).

Her questions are the ones we all believe must be asked of the students that we teach (and that Parbati used with her graduate students):

*What are some of the inequitable experiences that may occur in an online graduate program?
What online teaching practices do graduate students report as deepening their learning?
What can online professors do to create an equitable learning environment that fosters deep learning?
How can learning relationships be strengthened online?*

Here's a quote from Maria, one of Michelle's students, that addresses the questions:

I know that this sounds crazy, but I like being able to put names to faces. I also like to make it more personable because, I feel like it's a journey for all of us, but when I'm actually able to see, like I know my professor's face. I'm like, Okay, she really does have my back. I mean it just makes this whole experience a little less just 'me and my computer' and a little more personable, which I really do appreciate it.

Vaughan also stressed the significant role of visual data both in her action research and, also, in our culture of inquiry:

Videos from the conference planning sessions (along with included transcripts) not only depict the growth in my inquiry ideas but show how the understanding of key concepts included in this paper gain depth and connection to others through the shared experience of this culture of inquiry. The resulting effect is a stronger individual effort through the exchange of ideas and experience created when those involved in the culture of inquiry can "be themselves" and learn through others (p. 7).

2. Parbati Dhungana (2022). Living educational values for enhancing self-educating strategies for equitable education.

Dhungana's intention is "to develop a harmonious equitable space balancing the logical mind and intuitive heart to attain and sustain harmony within me and in my graduate class. Here evolved a query/research question- *How could I develop harmonious equitable space within and out in my class?* (p. 4)"

In her research the reader follows her inquiry examining ways to bring her values of harmony and equity into her own life as well as in her classroom. She examines the obstacles and challenges in living her values when she experiences disharmony in our culture of inquiry. By examining the dialogue in our culture of inquiry sessions, Parbati came to recognize her own struggles with expressing herself in the English language,

The values/ideas that get "blessed" by the academy as a result of linguistic hegemony do not seem to be the values/ideas that encourage living a harmonious life (to me). There is a tension there, and I believe you may be working on a larger idea of value hegemony that is related to the language of power in academia (perhaps there is a better term for this that I do not know! (p. 17)

Parbati argues that integrating 'other than English languages' in teaching, learning, and assessing processes foster equity, disrupts systemic inequality, and deepens learning.

Partbati then takes that concern into her classroom to research to see if integrating multiple languages in the classroom would make learning more equitable but that approach ran into system directives about using English and student uncertainty about using Nepali which is only one of many Nepalese languages:

I think my perspective is becoming a razor-like sharp, placing myself between logical mind and intuitive heart; Purusha and Prakriti; eastern and western. And I was attaining harmony. Attainment was possible with an intellectual sense. However, sustaining or nurturing was not possible without a loving, caring, and respectful culture. I found a 'culture of inquiry', a 'womb-like space' or safe, open, cozy, loving, caring, supportive for sustaining harmony.

In her findings, she states:

The EWT (e.g. tantric philosophy) may help to (re)imagine (Timalsina, 2013) a harmonious equitable world through (re)search, (de)construction, (re, co)construction of alternatives, or by nurturing immense available possibilities for the common good. In short, my attempt of bringing together Eastern Wisdom Tradition (EWT), with a critical Western Academic Knowledge Tradition (WAKT) may contribute to enhance equity and harmony within and in the world around. (p. 31)

3. Swaroop Rawal (2022). Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in an Indian /global context.

Swaroop explains that her research is focused on how she improved her teaching despite the conditions of the pandemic <"banking education" Freire (1970)> because of inadequate access to the right technologies or the skills to use them and enabled her to become a more socially responsible thinker.

Swaroop makes a connection between 'culture of inquiry' and 'knowledge-creating culture':

A culture of inquiry is a safe, supportive space wherein practitioner-researchers are enabled to share their vulnerabilities, to make explicit their values, and to hold themselves accountable for living according to those values (Vaughan & Delong, 2019). I argue without a culture of inquiry a knowledge-creating culture is challenging to achieve because in a self-study, like mine, the researcher is vulnerable and may not be assertive

enough about putting their new learning into practice and may not be confident enough to share knowledge (p. 3).

Using her Eastern way of seeing the world, Swaroop explains the connection between education and freedom in helping people decide their paths:

A verse in Sanskrit – ‘Sa Vidya ya Vimuktaye’ – explains my understanding of the purpose of education. The meaning of the Sanskrit verse is the ultimate aim of education is liberation. Mukti – means freedom from all bondages. Its reference is not only to spiritual liberation but to be able to break the bondage at every level is the ultimate aim of Muktakari Vidya or Liberating Education. (p. 2)

Swaroop explains a change in her teaching by reassessing her assumptions and challenging them which enabled her to become a more socially responsible thinker and educator:

Social responsibility is a moral obligation on an individual to take decisions or actions that are in favour and useful to society. This makes it obligatory for me not only to improve my teaching practice but to act in a manner so as to support teachers who are not tech-savvy, who are not trained to use technology effectively (see Ean, 2020)

4. **Jack Whitehead (2022)**. Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century through Living Educational Theory, Action Research, Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a UK/global context.

Jack focuses on his new understandings of the significance on the qualities of ‘recognition’ and ‘participation’ that I am experienced with my co-presenters in the Symposium grounded in his value of equity within this expression of value by one person with another within a culture of inquiry. He explains the importance of understanding the importance of both lexical definitions of value and ostensive expressions of meanings of value, through digital visual data on the relationships in our planning meetings for this symposium. He gives evidence that contributing to the cultivation of equitable education systems requires a quality of participation that expresses as fully as possible values of humanity as e cited ‘Hymn To Participation’ (Skolimowski, 1994).

Love is the deepest form of participation.

Where there is love there is participation.

Loveless participation is an anaemic involvement.

To participate is the first step to loving.

*How deeply can you enter into the immensity of the universe?
As deeply as you can embrace it in the arms of your participation.
Everything else is a mere shadow. The real thing
Is our immense journey of becoming through participation. (p.158-9)*

In the section above, on using digital visual data with empathetic resonance to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied values, Parbati responded to claims about the values express on the video with:

On 23 Jan 2022, at 05:04, Parbati Dhungana <parupdl77@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Jack,

The image that you captured was perfectly fine as my smile is evidence of my value of equity (and harmony) as a value of human flourishing. I think we are conducting a participatory, collaborative, or cooperative inquiry to develop equitable strategies to improve what we have been doing which is enhancing our life-affirming energies. Within our community of "culture of inquiry" we have been getting a loving, caring, and respectful learning environment. According to the Eastern Wisdom Traditions, which includes Yogic knowledge traditions of South East Asia, 'love, care, and respect' (I understand them as my living value, "living love") are connected to the Heart Chakra. As the heart lies at the center of the body, we are activating our Heart Chakra by 'living love' and thereby influencing all the remaining 6 Chakras of our body.

All five of us have acknowledged that we have experienced ourselves and each other being recognised in the fundamental way described by Fukuyama (1992), using words alone. However, we have given ostensive expressions of embodied meaning, that go beyond lexical definitions of meaning, through the digital visual data.

5. **Jacqueline Delong (2022)**. Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a Canadian/global context.

Delong explains how examining Cultures of Inquiry can contribute to cultivating equitable education for the members of the community and those they influence. The theoretical perspectives of Living Educational Theory, Action Research and Cultures of Inquiry draw insights from a wide variety of sources including alternatives to inequities, epistemicide, colonization and the dominance of the English language. The method, a pedagogy of a culture of inquiry

which involves creating a space, a culture of inquiry, where individuals have comfort and agency to be vulnerable and to use their knowledge-creating capacities to improve their own and others' learning. They transform their educational values into educational standards of practice and judgement in the creation of their own living-educational-theories.

Practitioners taking responsibility for their own professional development based on their values and their exploration of the question, 'How can I improve my teaching?' with the encouragement and support of a culture of inquiry is the core of her research as a superintendent of education, as a university professor, and as a mentor of international practitioner-researchers. Her values, while dynamic and in flux, include loved into learning, cultures of inquiry and democracy/equity.

This creative space, culture of inquiry, is assessed for its efficacy within our family/community of Living Educational Theory researchers cultivating equitable education systems from our dialogue and research in this 2022 symposium and continues from the research presented in a symposium at AERA 2021 on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts.' (DeLong, et al., 2021).

In collecting the data for this 'wisdom inquiry', 'to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world' (Maxwell, 2021, p. 43), we are intending to address real problems of the world like living according to values of True North principles (Covey, 1989) to improve inequities, to love students into learning (Campbell, 2019), to make a safe, comfortable, democratic and equitable culture of inquiry for those in our sphere of influence.

In our regular Monday morning meeting on March 14, 2022, we discussed the significance of our research and arrived at the conclusion that our learning about inequitable educational systems was a unique approach: from our international culture of inquiry, we had learned that inequities have formed because of the dominance of the English language and Western views of education, research and learning, omitting the Eastern Wisdom Tradition and ways of knowing. To that end, we have learned to take time and pay attention that we are being inclusive and recognizing and encouraging other languages and ways of knowing not as add-ons but as endemic to knowledge-creation. We have learned as teachers that we must listen to the students and amend our ways of teaching and communicating to include all the voices and ways of knowing.

Significance

The scholarly significance is focused on a distinction between education research and

educational research. Using de Santos' (2014) idea of 'epistemicide', the influence of education researchers on educational researchers is analysed in terms of the replacement by education researchers of the practical principles used by educational researchers to explain their educational influences in learning. Evidence of this replacement is provided from social pressures in the American and British Educational Research Associations where much evidence resides of inequalities in opportunities, research and participation. The scientific significance is focused on "utilizing new forms of data and data analytics" in the use of dialogue as research method, digital visual data and the method of empathetic resonance to clarify and communicate the meanings of the embodied expressions of the values that constitute human flourishing and that are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

We conclude these reflections with our evolving understandings of Eastern Spiritual Traditions and Western Critical Academic Traditions. In our 2021 AERA symposium presentations, Dhunghana (2021) included both traditions in her presentation:

Although I developed a sense of educational responsibility since I chose teaching as my profession, it was not explicit until I connected the notion of satva from the Eastern Wisdom Tradition with the emancipatory interest of Habermas (1972) and thereby, found the limitation of human cognitive interests. Although emancipatory interest supports working for the benefit of all with empowering intent by engaging in critical reflection, this cognitive human interest seems insufficient to promote a sense of educational responsibility as it overlooks the merit of living values such as love, care, respect, and joy.

Therefore, through this paper I explore the context-responsive joyful teaching and learning approaches in the interdisciplinary university classroom setting. For it, I looked to answer to the question: How could I enhance joyful teaching and learning in the graduate classes? (Dhungana, 2021)

Over these five years, we have researched our practice, engaged with different ways of knowing and cognitively and spiritually increased our understanding of colonizing practices (Bhattacharya, 2021), that impede our own flourishing and those we influence. In our AERA symposium presentations (DeLong et al., 2021 & 2022) we have used digital video through ZOOM to communicate, to share and to develop our ideas and presentations. Through these dialogues we bring together insights from an Eastern Wisdom Tradition with a Western Critical Academic Tradition to further develop our contributions to knowledge democracy and an ecology of knowledges that enhance the flow of values of human flourishing.

It is important to understand that the 2017 multi-media presentation at the Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy can be understood in relation to the 2015 ARNA Town Hall meeting

and to the AERA 2021, 2022 Symposium Presentations. This living process is distinguished by the relationally dynamic values that provide the explanatory principles for the educational influences in learnings. These explanations are contributing to the ecologies of knowledges of practitioner-researchers as they enhance the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

We hope that you sense our love in our work in this Living Educational Theories Culture of Educational Inquiry and wish to join us to be loved into learning in our Loving Learning Conference as Zuber-Skerritt (2017), expresses it:

... I have argued that we need to shift away from the mindset of neoliberalism and reductionism dominating our present society and driving its obsession with consumerism, power and control. Instead we need a collaborative, participative and inclusive paradigm built on love and working through local and global action to connect us with each other as human beings and with nature. Society needs to be renewed by making a shift from the negative energy of fear, competition, control and war to the positive energy of faith, love, hope and creativity. Clearly, we need to conceptualize and practice not just learning conferences but Loving Learning Conferences. (p. 224).

In conclusion, as Michelle says of our culture of inquiry, “I believe our intentional love and support for one another shine through in these images.” and Parbati says it is there that we connect “to the Heart Chakra”. I hope that you, dear reader, will join our culture of inquiry and create your own living-educational-theory!

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