Contributing to Moving Action Research to Activism with Living Theory Research.

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Paper presented to the Action Research Network of the Americas Conference
Montréal, Québec, Canada, June 2019

Abstract

This paper follows the organisation of the successful proposal: The research and action aims; methodology, theoretical tools and methods; results, outputs, program changes and events. The research aims are focused on the communication of meanings of relationally dynamic values in educational conversations in the generation of living-theories that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. The action aims are focused on establishing a global educational conversation with a focus on improving practice with these values. The methodology, theoretical tools and methods are focused on the generation of their living-theories. The results, outputs, program changes and events demonstrate the spreading global educational influences of Living Theory research.

The research and action aims

The research aims to contribute to an ecology of knowledges that includes moving from action research to activism with Living Theory research. In this research individuals hold themselves accountable for their action aims of living in practice, as fully as possible, their values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. The research is located in a social context that is distinguished by knowledge-mobilisation, knowledge-democracy and an ecology of knowledges. I shall begin by clarifying these meanings before providing an evidence-based explanation of a process of moving from action research to activism with Living Theory research.

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) is an important part of the mission of the Action Research Network of the Americas mission.

> Often defined as the use of evidence and expertise to align research, policy and practice to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families, KMb involves knowledge sharing between research producers (e.g. university researchers) and research users (including practitioners whose work can benefit from research findings), often with the help of third parties or intermediaries (e.g. trainers, consultants, and professional development staff). The concept reflects the view that verified empirical knowledge should be the basis for policies and practices in education, healthcare, community development, social services and a variety of other social sectors. KMb thus fits within concern in the social sciences with bridging gaps between research and practice. KMb also fits with ARNA's origins, as ARNA emerged through shared recognition among the network's founders that work was needed to better position action researchers in relation to the use of evidence and expertise in shaping social policies, in particular in education. (http://arnawebsite.org/knowledge-mobilization/)

As an activist in knowledge-mobilisation I share ARNA's desire to:

> … seek an alignment in which knowledge is decolonized to better serve the marginalized and oppressed and is created in intellectual and social spaces in which knowledge production is horizontal and symmetrical, is based on respect for diverse epistemologies and in which action researchers demonstrate a deep appreciation of the capacity of ordinary people to fashion a socially just, more equitably organized and peaceful world.

Ecology of Knowledges

For me, knowledge-mobilisation is intimately connected to an ecology of knowledges that was highlighted in the first Global Assembly in Knowledge Democracy: towards an ecology of knowledges, in Cartagena on the 16th June 2018. An ecology of knowledges is:

> …organized with the intention of initiating a thoughtful and strategic assessment of the politics of knowledge creation and the potential of participatory approaches as alternatives to a monolithic knowledge enterprise based on the domination of the

Global North and the marginalization and subordination of other knowledges. (https://knowledgedemocracy.org/)

Knowledge Democracy

In a lecture on 'Knowledge Democracy and Educational Action Research: Beliefs, Science, Politics and Resistance in Knowledge Production' Professor Lonnie Rowell, a co-founder and lead organiser in establishing the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA\had this to say about knowledge-democracy:

> Knowledge democracy is a concept that has grown out of transformations in the politics of knowledge production. The concept is rooted in resistance to the monopolisation of expert knowledge producers in relation to global north-south splits in the politics of development from the mid-20th century up to our time. The democratisation of knowledge production and the expansion of challenges to all forms of elitist domination have been joined at the hip for at least the last 50 years, fueled by a recognition of the transformative power of knowledge democratisation.

In an earlier paper on 'How can transdisciplinary research contribute to knowledge democracy?' Joske F.G. Bunders, Jacqueline E.W. Broerse, Florian Keil, Christian Pohl, Roland W. Scholz and Marjolein B.M. Zweekhorst (2010) make the following points about knowledge-democracy:

> In a knowledge democracy both dominant and non-dominant actors have equal access and ability to put this knowledge forward in the process of solving societal problems. In order to enable these actors to contribute meaningfully to decision-making around public policy and research agendas, we argue that a transdisciplinary research process is needed. In this chapter we critically reflect on the principles, concepts and core methods of transdisciplinary research… From the perspective of knowledge democracy, we can distinguish two important dimensions in research approaches: the degree of knowledge input of lay groups that is included in a specific transdisciplinary project and the degree in which non-dominant actors are explicitly involved in the decision-making of the development process of policies or research agendas… Knowledge democracy connotes a society in which a wide diversity of actors hold relevant knowledge to address important societal problems (In 't Veld 2009). In such an ideal democracy dominant and non-dominant actors have equal access and ability to bring this knowledge forward in order to contribute to solutions for societal problems. Such a knowledge democracy has no bias regarding access of knowledge, ways of knowledge sharing and the role of Knowledge Democracy

In concluding this section on research and action aims I want to focus on 4 questions asked by Budd Hall (2015) in a presentation he made on 'Beyond Epistemicide: Knowledge Democracy and Higher Education' whilst being Co-Holder, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria .

Some questions for myself

1. How do I 'decolonize', 'deracialise,' demasculanise and degender my inherited 'intellectual spaces?'

2. How do I support the opening up of spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic, and that have exercised dominance over (perhaps have even suffocated) intellectual and scholarly thought and writing?

3. How do I contribute to the building of new academic cultures and, more widely, new inclusive institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity – whether class, gender, national, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, epistemological or methodological in nature?

4. How do I become a part of creating the new architecture of knowledge that allows co- construction of knowledge between intellectuals in academia and intellectuals located in community settings? (Hall, 2015, p.12)

In terms of research and action aims I want to emphasise the necessity of including 'I' with such questions, **together with** the personal responsibility of practically exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering such questions, as an activist. This necessity and responsibility are explored below in methodology, theoretical tools and methods.

Methodology, Theoretical Tools and Methods

The living-theory-methodologies in this research draw insights from the methodologies of auto-ethnography, critical social constructivism, action research, narrative and self-study. The theoretical tools include insights from understandings of ecology of knowledges and knowledge democracy and in creating alternatives to neoliberalism with co-operative economies. The methods include the use of empathetic resonance and empathetic validity for clarifying the meanings of the embodied values used as explanatory principles. They include the use of four criteria of comprehensibility, evidence, normative influences and authenticity to strengthen the validity of explanations in moving from action research to activism.

Methodology

In Living Theory research an individual produces an explanation for 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. In research proposals made to Universities, it is usual to specify the research methodology to be used (applied). It is a characteristic of Living Theory research that the researcher generates their unique living-theory methodology in the course of producing their explanation of educational influences in learning. To stress the importance of this generation, rather than the application of a methodology I have described how to justify your creation of a living theory methodology in the creation of your living educational theory. This justification includes responding to Creswell's ideas on: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies; Ellis' and Bochner's ideas on autoethnography;

Whitehead & McNiff's ideas on action research and Living Theory research; Tight's ideas on phenomenography.
(see - http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arsup/livingtheorymethodologies.pdf)

Theoretical Tools

Every Living Theory researcher will have a different constellation of theoretical tools that they use in explaining their educational influences in learning. One of the distinguishing characteristics of a living-theory are the insights that the researcher draws on from different theoretical perspectives in their explanations. For example, Critical Theory offers insights into the political, historical, cultural and economic influences of neoliberal policies in the social contexts that locate the practitioner's enquiries. Psychoanalytic theories can be helpful in understanding how to strengthen one's mental health in terms of one's ontological security in the face of debilitating and destructive power relations in the social context. Positivist, Dialectical and Inclusional theories can offer insights into the nature of the claims to knowledge being made by the Living Theory researcher. The living-theories that help to constitute Living Theory research can help a Living Theory researcher to locate their original contribution to knowledge within the field of Living Theory research. Theories of climate change (Bendell, 2018) are particularly helpful in contributing to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research through lessons learnt from the Extinction Rebellion movement.

Methods

I shall highlight two methods that I have found particularly useful in moving action research to activism with Living Theory research. The first is the use of an action-reflection cycle in the following framework and rationale for Living Theory research.

Action-reflection cycle

Framework and rationale for Living Theory research

Issue / Question	Response
What really matters to me? What do I care passionately about? What kind of difference do I want to make in the world?	
What are my values and why?	
What is my concern?	

Why am I concerned?	
What kind of experiences can I describe to show the reasons for my concerns?	
What can I do about it?	
What will I do about it?	
How do I evaluate the educational influences of my actions?	
How do I demonstrate the validity of the explanation of my educational influence in learning?	
How do I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluation?	

The focus on improving practice, as well as generating a valid explanation of educational influences in learning, ensures a continuing focus on the activism of the researcher.

Empathetic resonance

The second method involves the use of digital visual data with the method of empathetic resonance to keep the researcher focused on their accountable, in their explanation of educational influence, for living as fully as possible the values they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. In writing the above words I am aware of limitations of using words alone to communicate meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values. I have provided elsewhere (Whitehead, 2012) details of the method of empathetic resonance with digital visual data to clarify and communicate the embodied expressions of the meanings of these values and their use as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. The details include the following:

> The use of a method of empathetic resonance is central to the original contribution of this presentation of educational knowledge. The method is used below with visual

data and digital technology to communicate meanings of a 'relationally dynamic awareness' and 'energy-flowing values' in explanatory principles for explaining educational influences in learning.

You can see more evidence of the educational influence and scholarly significance of this approach in another presentation to AERA 2012 on *The educational significance of a teaching model for the creation of a culture of inquiry* (Delong and Whitehead, 2012). Part of this evidence is drawn from visual data on the evolution of relational dynamic understandings of love, hope and wisdom in educational conversations between Liz Campbell, Cathy Griffin, Jacqueline Delong and Jack Whitehead.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHAxuNe5vVw

I am not suggesting that you watch all the 25:15 minutes of the conversation. I am suggesting that you watch the last 19 seconds leading up to the frame above to experience an empathetic resonance with the life-affirming energy that is being 'pooled' at the end of this conversation with the values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives in education, including love, hope and wisdom.

I am suggesting that as you watch the last 19 seconds at:

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

you move the cursor backwards and forwards so that you can see if you feel a resonance around 16 seconds with a 'pooling of energy with values'. As we, as participants in the conversation, watch these 19 seconds of video and pause at 16 seconds the participants in the conversation experience an empathetic resonance with

our life-affirming energy that is being 'pooled' at the end of this conversation with the values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives in education, including love, hope and wisdom. The scholarly significance of this experience will, to a large extent, depend on you and others sharing and extending this awareness of a pooling of life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity:

> We need a new approach: recognising the importance of values and frames; taking into account how the things we call for or do can help strengthen or weaken them; and making sure that, in doing so, we are all pulling together across different sectors. The need for trade-offs and compromises will remain – but we should make them in light of the bigger picture: an understanding of the values that will be essential to securing lasting change. (Common Cause, 2012)

I know that each individual will experience what they recognise as love, hope and wisdom in their unique way. If you do watch the 25:15 minute clip above you will hear a conversation in which the participants are sharing their embodied meanings of love, hope and wisdom.

Results, outputs, program changes and events.

i)   The results include the accreditation of over 40 Living Theory doctoral theses in a range of Universities in different countries.

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

ii)   Recent outputs include:

Format	Description
pdf	Whitehead, J. (2019) Action Research for Self-study and Living-Educational-Theories. DRAFT before publication in Zuber-Skeritt, O., Wood, L. (2019) Action Learning and Action Research: Genres and Approaches. Bingley; Emerald
pdf	Whitehead, J. (2019) The underlying importance of context and voice in action research. In: Mertler, Craig A., (ed.) The Wiley handbook of action research in education. Wiley handbooks in education . Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, UK, pp. 207-228. (Final draft before publication)
pdf	Stringer, Ernest (Ernie) , Dick, Bob and Whitehead, Jack (2019) Worldwide perspectives on action research in education. In: Mertler, Craig A. , (ed.) The Wiley handbook of action research in education. Wiley handbooks in education . Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, UK, pp. 97-113. (Final draft before publication)
pdf	Whitehead, J., Delong, J., Huxtable, M., Campbell, L., Griffin, C. & Mounter, J. (2019) Self-Study in Elementary and Secondary Teaching: A Living Theory Approach. Second edition of the International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education. Dordrecht; Springer (in press).
pdf	Mounter, J., Huxtable, M. & Whitehead, J. (2019) Using TASC and Spirals in Living Theory research in explanations of educational influences in a global social movement. Gifted Education International, 35(2); 91-109
pdf	Wood, L., McAteer, M. & Whitehead, J. (2019) How are Action Researchers Contributing to Knowledge Democracy? A Global Perspective. Educational Action Research 27(1); 7-21.
pdf	Whitehead, J. (2018) 'Emancipation and Epistemicide : Two approaches to professing higher educational research', a paper presented at the conference of the European Association of Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) on 'Dialogue between ontology and epistemology: New perspectives on theory and methodology in research on learning and education', 27 August 2018, Homerton College, Cambridge.
pdf	Whitehead, J. (2018) Presentation on Evidence-based practice and pedagogic research, at the SOLSTICE e-learning and CLT Conference at Edge Hill University on the 8th June 2018

pdf   Whitehead, J. (2018) Notes to support Jack Whitehead's keynote to the 10th World Congress of ALARA on 18 June 2018 in Norwich University, Vermont, USA

pdf   Whitehead, J. (2018) Living Theory Research As A Way Of Life. Bath; Brown Dog Books

pdf   Whitehead, J. (2017) Jack Whitehead's review of Dawn Garbett & Alan Ovens (Ed) (2017) Being Self-Study Researchers in a Digital World. Switzerland; Springer International Publishing.

pdf   Whitehead, J. (2017) A Living Theory Approach To Changing Perspectives In Contemporary Teaching. Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) Conference in Dobrovnik, Croatia, 23-25 October 2017

pdf   Whitehead, J. (2017) The Education Of Global Citizens In Living Theory Research With An Alternative Globalization. Presentation on the 2nd July 2017 at the Department of Education of the University of Bath, 50th Anniversary Conference

iii)   The program changes include the validation of a University accredited MA curriculum for the professional development of educators using a Living Theory approach.

One of the most impressive contributions to moving action research to activism with Living Theory Research has been accomplished by Joy Mounter of The Learning Institute in Cornwall in leading the successful proposal to Newman University to accredit an MA in 'Values-led Leadership Using a Living Theory Research Methodology' (See http://www.spanglefish.com/allicanbe/index.asp?pageid=698882)

The information on the programme includes the following:

Strong values-led professional development underpinned by these core principles.

Ten Core Principles:

- Living Theory Research Methodology (Jack Whitehead)
- Values-led Leadership and Professional Mastery
- Personal Growth and Transformation –Collective Growth and Transformation
- Life-affirming and Life-enhancing Energy
- Knowledge Creators - adding to the educational knowledge-base
- Social Endeavour – Meaning to Movement
- Make a Difference-MAD
- ~i~we~I~us Relationships
- Nurturing Responsiveness Deepening to Nurturing Connectiveness

Introduction:

This 3 year part-time MA: Values-led Leadership course offered by The Learning Institute (www.learninginstitute.co.uk) in partnership with Newman University is a values-led MA qualification. The course has a rich diversity of modules, enabling MA students to link their research and developing skills to their professional aspirations.

Our MA is a flexible course, combining taught modules and Living Theory Research. Living Theory is a methodology which starts with the student and their practice, values and the educational influences they have.

Our MA is designed for those whose aim is to develop and improve their leadership skills, enhance their professional profile and engage in rigorous research and high level enquiry.

The modules support professional development through investigation of current sector (education, health) issues in the context of values-led leadership. Research based values-led practice through a Living Theory methodology is at the heart of our MA.

Each of the five modules provides academic rigour, excellent supervision and high quality resources and support.

MA Modules:

Values-led Leadership (30 credits)

Professional Enquiry (30 credits)

Leading Change: social change, social movement, social justice (30 credits)

Research Design (30 credits)

Dissertation (Double module, 60 credits)

iv)   The events include:

        * two educational conversations with multi-screen SKYPE contributions from national and international contributions.

a) Report on the *CARN study day/Pre-conference participatory workshop* on the 4th February, 2016, hosted by Rachael Burgess in Bath, for the '1st Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy: towards an ecology of knowledges' in Cartegena, Columbia on the 16th June 2017. https://knowledgedemocracy.org/2017/02/15/report-on-the-carn-study-daypre-conference-workshop/

b) Report on the 13th April 2019 gathering hosted by Rachael Burgess in Bath UK. *Living Theory research making a difference in communities and organisations: continuing conversations.* **http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwreport13april260419.pdf**

        * workshops and Town Hall meetings at the conferences of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), Action Learning, Action Research Association (ALARA) and the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA).

    A workshop at the 10th ALARA World Congress at Norwich University, Vermont, USA on the 19th June 2018 on "Where do we go from here in contributing to 'The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?'" Delong, Whitehead & Huxtable. http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwworkshopalara2018.pdf

Whitehead, J. (2016) How am I integrating the personal and political in improving professional practice and generating educational knowledge with collaborative/cooperative action research? A paper presented at the CARN 2016 Conference at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln, UK, 10-13 November, with the theme of 'Integrating the Personal and Political in Professional Practice.' http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/carn/jwCARNindividual121116.pdf

Delong, J., Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2016) Town Hall: Come and join our live conversation with an international community of practitioner action researchers. A Town Hall Meeting at the Action Research Network of the Americas Conference on the 8th May 2015 at the University of Toronto, Canada. http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/jddjwmharna080516.pdf

Whitehead, J. (2016) Introductory comments for a workshop on Teaching and Action Research at the University of San Simon, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 26-29 September, 2016. http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/bolivia/jackintrobolivia160916.pdf

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