

## ***'Global Perspectives: Re-imagining Education'***

### **Inspiring a Generation of Educators that Do Not Realise they Need Inspiring**

#### **Abstract**

Most CPD provides training to improve skills and subject knowledge but rarely does it enable professional educational-practitioners to see themselves as educational knowledge-creators who can contribute to a global educational knowledge-base. The focus of this paper is on my professional practice as the Master's lead in an Institute of Higher Education that has values of social justice that underpins all its work. I will begin by outlining the development of a University accredited Living Theory Masters curriculum.

The MA: Values-led Leadership is designed to offer a postgraduate programme with a contemporary academic stance and distinct focus on developing values-led leaders for the future. The emphasis on enhancing the knowledge-creating abilities of the educators in contributing to leadership knowledge, skills and practice, whilst developing and understanding their ontological values. The MA given curriculum has been written to enable practitioners to find, create and live their own living curriculum. The innovative curriculum is designed to enable professional educators to engage in practitioner-research within an educational setting that provides collaborative support. Sustainability and the concept of interaction with global citizenship, which is a new development and a very interesting feature of the programme.

I will conclude by showing the contribution this programme makes to a global movement of educational researchers developing values-based educational opportunities

#### **Introduction**

Children their passion to have their voice heard

QUIFF

What inspires me to make a difference?

Practitioner they deserved to have

Those values are at my core running through me like a stick of rock

Research- can't see what they are saying is sad in a box metaphor re my older research

Inspire, make a difference, excite, create passion & joy, hope we can be heard, make a difference

Stone on water creates a ripple, that single pebbles ripple can become a series of ripples that travel so far.

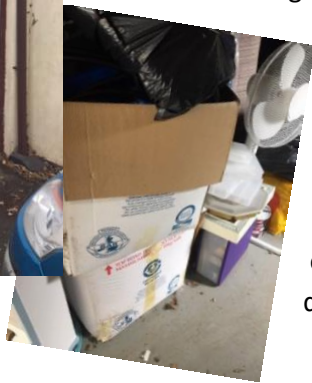
I feel a lack of connection between my practice and my beliefs and the paper I am struggling to put together for this BERA Conference. The title of the conference caught my imagination, with an unconscious thought; they have opened a discussion into possibilities and my way of professional being.

## ***'Global Perspectives: Re-imagining Education'***

Rummaging in my dank garage, ducking spider's webs and the faint scurry that hints at mice again, I looked behind the rolled up rug, searched bags and boxes for the treasure I sought. Slightly dusty



and cold even for May, I finally discovered the package of children's work from one of the schools I worked in.



Languishing nearly forgotten, stuffed into an old cardboard box I felt a surge of pleasure at the memories stirred, the joy I felt co-creating with the children, but also a wave of guilt that swamped me as their voices in the world, a key demand have been silenced! Left gathering dust.

But, I can make a difference. I can bring the meaning of our journey as co-creators and researchers into the public domain here at the conference.

I have been struggling to start my BERA paper and make it clear and communicate the inspiration and heart felt excitement my research has brought into my professional life! The outline is contained within the abstract I submitted which will frame this paper, but still I hesitate.

Now I can see the end point, the impact of professional development on my students and on my professional well-being, this inspiration needs to be the beginning, the hook for the reader or listener and promise of what is possible.

### Passion to Have Their Voices Heard

#### A special moment in time



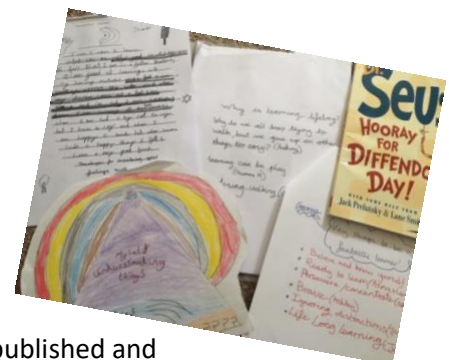
"..education is not just about the transmission of knowledge, skills and values, but is concerned with the individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their "coming into the world" as unique, singular beings." (Biesta, 2006, p.27).

This photograph caught in my classroom sums up the learning and engagement of the pupils as researchers and knowledge

creators, fully engaged in the educational process.

Creation of time was achieved to understand themselves as a learner and as a person and their place in the world. Time to discover passions and interests, to explore the theories of learning published and to reflect and consider their opinions. These children were in a mixed Year 2/3 class aged 6,7 and 8 years old in a period of tighter government control, the Literacy Hour, Numeracy Hour and detailed National Curriculum.

From exploring their learning skills they developed resilience, confidence in their own voice and ideas. They developed their own theory of learning, 'QUIFF': Question, Understanding, I am Important, Focus, Feelings and a depth of theory behind it. They had a determination to influence the learning of other children, other adults and the system they were in. Roles were fluid of



researcher, teacher, coach and learner shared between us. As I researched my practise and the influence on my learning, the learning of the children and the wider school community, the children researched themselves as a person, as a learner, the role of teacher and researcher until we co-habited a space where we were both knowledge creators. O' Brian and Moules (2007, p.387) highlight the tendency to not include young children as researchers, the lack of co-created research papers reflects this still.

"Within this paradigm there is a tendency for researchers, and others, to perceive children as incompetent and incapable of understanding the research process" (O'Brian & Moules, 2007, p387)

What came from this research was the possibility of holding the space we created in the classroom inside of ourselves. A space we could internalise and hold open, in a form for ourselves, to contemplate, reflect and develop ideas and knowledge. A couple of years after leaving my class a boy sat beside me at lunch, something we had not done for a long time. We chatted and he reminded me of some research we had done about Belle Wallace's ( ) TASC Wheel. The children wrote to her saying that their learning had moved beyond her ideas and asked why she hadn't written a new book. They described her 2 dimensional wheel as 3 dimensional and made a model demonstrating their ideas which they shared at a teacher training conference Belle Wallace invited them to. The boy sat with me continued, explaining how his learning and ideas had moved on. He now believed the wheel should be 5 dimensional including time and space. The space he held inside, enabled ideas to be linked, stored and developed as his understanding grew.

"We might look at learning as a response to what is other and different, to what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs us, rather than as the acquisition of something we want to possess." (Biesta, 2006, p.27)

These experiences recorded through my Living Theory research defined the practitioner I strove to be. The core professional development that has had, and is continuing to have, the greatest impact on my energy and commitment as a practitioner is being a Living Theory researcher. This research methodology enabled me to ask questions such as, "How can I improve my practice?". To define my ontological values and look at how I embody them in my practice or any living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989 ).

### **The Learning Institute - a Values-led Organisation**



I am a higher education lecturer working for The Learning Institute (TLI) in Cornwall, responsible for teaching at level, 4,5,6 and 7, as well as being MA and Leadership Lead. Previously I was for many years, a teacher, senior leader and Head teacher within primary education.

Through my role with The Learning Institute (TLI) ([www.learninginstitute.co.uk](http://www.learninginstitute.co.uk)), I find a resonance between my own values and purpose and that of my employer, TLI. The Learning Institute works within challenged coastal, isolated rural, declining industrial and diverse inner city communities. TLI provides vocational degree courses which address the governments (2019) "The Future of Seaside Towns" report. The Learning Institute helps to removes barriers to higher education, widening access for those parts of society where there is no tradition of undertaking higher education study.

At the heart of The Learning Institute are lived values working towards engendering community aspiration and community social movement.

Living my values in my role as an educational practitioner is vitally important to me. So much of my practice has been driven by national directives, regardless of the needs or interests of the children in my care. Frankl (2004) identifies this as creating 'disrupted meaning structures', hence my search for a setting where my ontological values can be fully embodied in my practice.

Linking so closely to the focus of this conference on re-imagining education TLI has worked hard to develop a values-led leadership master's degree course for educational leaders. The MA: Values-led Leadership is a space to research their leadership practice and the values using a Living Theory Research methodology.

### **Academic Stance**

The rationale for my research is related to its contribution in fulfilling the new standard for teachers' professional development of the Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group (2016) in their description of effective practice in professional development of teachers:

High-quality professional development requires workplaces to be steeped in rigorous scholarship, with professionals continually developing and supporting each other.  
(Professional Development Expert Group, 2016, p. Preamble)

Amanda Spielman (2019), the Chief Inspector of OFSTED in her Twitter feed stated:

"Two words sum up my ambition for the framework and which underlie everything we have published today: substance and integrity."

From this perspective of integrity and focus on substance in education, the Ethical Leadership Commission (2019) in the, 'Navigating the Moral Maze', report also highlight values as an integral requirement to retain leaders for the future of schools.

This call for integrity and moral purpose by school leaders in the new OFSTED framework, coming into schools in September 2019, will require space for the development and reflection on the ontological and epistemological values that drive the individual leader's moral purpose. Within a framework of research, that forms the heart of a practitioner's professional development, a methodology is needed that enables them to clarify and nurture their own constellation of embodied values and identify the embodiment of professional integrity. Living Theory Research (LTR) methodology (Whitehead, 2010) enables the researcher to identify their life-affirming values and use these as their explanatory principles and standards of judgement when creating their own living-theory and their living-theory methodology. The educational practitioner's values are clarified and nurtured through the process. As the educational-practitioner generates their own living-theory they find where they are living contradictions (places in their practice where their values are contradicted) or are not living their values as fully as they can, and try to find ways of improving. This can also help to engender the belief of the educational practitioner that they can make an educational difference.

## **Living Theory Master's Curriculum, MA: Values-led Leadership**

'....each practitioner researcher clarifies, in the course of their emergence, in the practice of educational enquiry, the embodied ontological values to which they hold themselves accountable in their professional practice.' (Whitehead, 2005, p )

The MA in values-led leadership I designed and recently successfully submitted on behalf of The Learning Institute for validation by Newman University, relates to the current developments I outlined in educational research (Ethical Leadership Commission, 2019; Spielman, 2019; Wyse et al, 2018; Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group, 2016). The innovative focus and assessment methods of the Master's modules draw on the British Educational Research Associations 2019 focus:

“We welcome alternative and new ways of engaging with research which demonstrates a non-traditional approach to academic presentation.” (BERA, 2019)

An extract from the MA rationale:

“This new MA will provide a space for leaders to reflect on the values that form the basis of their practice and vision for themselves as a leader within education.

The modules within the MA Values-led Leadership pathway enable practitioners to research their educational influences in their leadership practice and to contribute to leadership knowledge, skills and practice, whilst developing and understanding their ontological values. These values are used as explanatory principles and standards of judgement in their contributions to leadership knowledge. Living Theory research methodology incorporated within the modules supports research into practice in light of values, as students offer their own living-educational-theory as an explanation of their educational influences to the educational knowledge base (Whitehead, 2010).

The innovative focus of the programme has an emphasis on asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve my leadership practice?’ The course offers a focus on generating and sharing evidence-based explanations of the educational influences of leadership practice in the learning of self, learning of others and in the communities within which the leadership practice is located. MA students will act as a validation group for each other's research.”

### **MA: Values-led Leadership**

#### **Year One:**

Research Design (30 credits)

Professional Enquiry (30 credits)

#### **Year Two:**

Values-led Leadership (30 credits)

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

#### **Year Three:**

Dissertation (60 credits)

The Master's programme sits outside one university faculty, usually education (see title), as values-led leadership is integral in all areas of society. TLI can run groups in our centres across the south-west, but also within Multi-academy Trusts, growing leaders for the future.

The MA focuses on the embodied life affirming and life enhancing values of educational practitioners used as standards of judgement in Living Theory research. By 'embodied values' I am not meaning a solely lexical definition of values that many researchers refer to. For instance, Hadar and Benish-Wiesman (2019) ask the question, 'Teacher's agency' do their values make a difference?' They answer with purely lexical definitions. They 'assess' the teachers' values using Schwartz et al. (2001) Portrait Values Questionnaire. As a Living Theory researcher practitioners clarify the meaning of the values they embody and want to live as fully as possible in their life and practice as these values emerge through their research. Practitioner-researchers gather and analyse data that enable them to recognise where they are a living contradiction, and take action, where possible, to align practice more closely to those values they have identified. They use the data to help them evaluate their practice and use as evidence in explanations of educational influence in learning. Periodically they generate an account of their living-theory research methodology that is their values-based explanations for their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in. They share their data and research methodology with a peer validation group asking others to help to improve the rigour and validity of research and contribute the knowledge created to the growth of a professional educational knowledge base.

Schwartz's (1994) definition of values aligns to my own view:

...that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity. Implicit

in this definition of values as goals is that:

1. they serve the interests of some social entity,
2. they can motivate action-giving it direction and emotional intensity,
3. they function as standards for judging and justifying action, and
4. they are acquired both through socialization to dominant group values and

through the unique learning experiences of individuals.

I understand Schwartz's (1) social entity as the flourishing of humanity. My living-theory research methodology demonstrates my embodied values (2, 3) and uses them as my standards of judgement. My values are clarified through my research relating to (4).

My heart as an educator is drawn to both Frankl (2004, 1972) and Whitehead (2010). Frankl (1972) describes drawing a 'spark' from life and Whitehead's (2010) 'life-affirming energy contributing to the flourishing of humanity'. As a practitioner I strive to live fully my life-affirming values through my practice, making a difference in the world, creating a sense of idealism as Frankl (1972) talks of. Through creating multiple living-theories, my embodied values have become central to my life and actions, both personally and professionally.

## **Knowledge Creating Abilities- Ontological Values - Embodiment in Practice**

### **Given Curriculum to a Living Curriculum**

I want to make a clear distinction between the 'given curriculum' and a 'living curriculum'. In their conceptualisations of the curriculum, Young (2019) and OFSTED (2019) refer to what I am calling the 'given curriculum':

"Accordingly, the curriculum, whether of a country (its national curriculum) or of a school or college, is always about knowledge: what is the knowledge that those attending a school or college will be able to acquire?" (Young, 2019)

OFSTED define a curriculum through these terms, 'intent, implementation and impact' (Harford, 2018), testing student's knowledge of the world, from what scholars and researchers have defined as truth (Young, 2019). Muijs et al (2019) further highlight how a curriculum is by its nature, at the heart of education and will control what the students are able to get out of their educational experience. This we measure and demonstrate through attainment and progress data which holds educational settings, such as schools to account against national expectations. A living curriculum is created by a student as they focus on their educational experiences in learning, often whilst engaging with a given curriculum which enables them to acquire skills and knowledge. They critically and creatively draw on the content of given curricula as they develop their own living curriculum that helps them, as Reiss and White (2003) put it:

- to lead a life that is personally flourishing,
- to help others to do so, too. (p.1)

The student's 'living' curriculum helps them to clarify their values, attitudes, beliefs, explore passions and interests, understanding of self in the world and make connections between different aspects of their life. An important aspect of this living curriculum is the ability and expectation to be a knowledge creator, whether for self or for others. This became very clear working with Year 2/3 children in a period of strict government curriculum guidance. My class of researchers asked a profound question that changed the journey of my research. "How can you write about learning without us?" How could I? So, I started the journey of co-creating knowledge and understanding in a constrictive given curriculum (Mounter 2008, 2012), creating our own living curriculum. The children created their own narrative and their own learning theory, QUIFF: Question, Understanding, I am Important, Focus and Feelings.

Dorne (2019) writes of schools enabling pupils to write their own story. The frustrating point also from Young's (2019) article in the same journal is that they both talk of the given curriculum. Here, in creating their own stories I thought Dorne was moving to a living curriculum, instead he is referring to his opening paragraph where he relates a child's development to writing a Curriculum Vitae of their life, exams, achievements and results.

### **Educational Research Communities Inspiring Practitioner Professional Development**

Living Theory as a form of Self-study research holds the practitioner, their practice and the educational influences they have in a place of shared mutuality, refining ontological values as life-affirming energy and standards of judgement (Whitehead, 2012). Living Theory research enables the researcher to look at their influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the social formations they are part of (Whitehead, 2010). Combining Auto-ethnography, Action Research and Narrative Enquiry with Living Theory, as Whitehead describes as 'a constellation of theories' (Whitehead, 2010) enables the practitioner to include awareness of any external and internal influences and bias as well as narrating and reflecting the cycles of the research journey.

Living-contradictions (Whitehead, 2010) are clarified as the researcher focuses on an aspect of their practice as they create their own living-theory methodology, which combines the academic rigour of exploring and working with theory, whilst questioning your practice and exploring the values that bring 'meaning and purpose to your life' (Huxtable, 2016).

Living Theory as a research methodology engenders a sense of community at its heart through the very nature of the research, as you look at your influences in your own learning, the learning of others and the social formations you are part of. This cannot be a one sided perspective, as an educational practitioner I want to make a difference to the students in my care. This forms a shared perspective, voice and journey as co-researchers in community.

Eze (2010), and Whitehead and Huxtable (2015) explore the concept of self being part of an educational community or collaboration through the African understanding of Ubuntu. Tutu (2012) describes this relational dynamic between self and being part of something bigger as, "I need you, in order for me to be me; I need you to be you to the fullest." Whitehead and Huxtable (2015) discuss how the 'I' in self, is 'distinct, unique and relational', which exists in an 'inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship'. Huxtable (2012) further defines the "trustworthy, respectful, co-creative spaces," where the world of researchers practice, questions and values touch. This space is then represented as the tilde or ~ between i~we~i.

"We use 'i' and 'we' to point to a relationship where individuals and collectives are neither subordinated nor dominant but exist in an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship. We use ~ to stand for living-boundaries (Huxtable, 2012): trustworthy, respectful, co-creative space, where individuals, collectives and the complex worlds of practice, knowledge and socio-historical cultures they inhabit and embody, touch" (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2015).

Mellettt writes to the second author of their article Gumede (2019):

"2018-09-26 PM to JG: Adapting Jerome's draft text by the addition of footnotes  
I hope that you can see that I am not trying to 'take over' your narrative but am attempting to add my voice as a sort of counterpoint to yours." Gumede and Mellett (2019, Pp. 7)



Here I can see the form of 'we' I describe above, the 'we' that challenges, questions, clarifies, deepens, offers. You can also see the 'i', a relationally dynamic 'i' still held open within 'we'.

Within a research community the flow of life-affirming energy amongst the group is generated through nurturing responsiveness (Mounter, 2012) creating "good-quality conversations" Gumede and Mellett (2019). Conversations that take many forms including those that are celebrating, challenging, questioning, exploring, clarifying personally through sharing and developing as just a few examples. This sense of developing can be seen through clarifying of ideas, developing personal understanding through others nurturing responsiveness, finding new paths to explore and a greater sense of self- identity and belief. Within the collective 'we', we can see the relationally dynamic 'i' growing the sense of self. Self as a person, as a practitioner, as a researcher, demonstrated as a capital 'i', thus ~i~we~I~us~.

### **Nurturing responsiveness – good quality educational conversations**

### **Global Citizenship, Global Movement**

"Every human being has the potential to manifest the finest mosaic of attributes in a dazzling complexity of difference and diversity. Yet so often, this human mosaic is dull and tarnished – only a hint of the incipient splendour remains. And yet, sometimes, we are inspired by the light radiated from an individual." Or from a class.  
(Author unknown)

### **References**

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Christenson and Prout

O'Brian, N. and Moules, T. (2007) A reflective participatory research project, Educational Action Research; vol 15, p. 387