

Creating an Educational Epistemology through Living Educational Theories

A keynote symposium proposal for presentation at the British Educational Research Association Conference, 23-25th September 2014 at Institute Of Education, University of London

Convenor, Prof. Jack Whitehead, University of Cumbria

Paper presentations: Dr. Je Kan Adler-Collins of Fukuoka University; Dr Jackie Delong, Brock University; Dr. Marie Huxtable, University of Cumbria; Prof. Jack Whitehead University of Cumbria

Discussant – Mark Potts, Bath Spa University

Overview

A form of values-based educational theorizing that contributes to the flourishing of humanity provides the overall coherence of the symposium.

At the first BERA conference in 1974, Jon Nisbet gave the inaugural address entitled 'Educational research; the state of the art'. 50 years on educational researchers are continuing to create educational knowledge by developing the art of researching to improve educational theory, practice and provision that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. During this symposium we explore the implications of the 2014 statement that the British Educational Research Association, 'exists to encourage educational research and its application for the improvement of practice and public benefit. We strive to ensure the best quality evidence from educational research informs policy makers, practitioners and the general public and contributes to economic prosperity, cultural understanding, social cohesion and personal flourishing. (BERA, 2014)

A clear distinction is made between education researchers whose contributions to knowledge are focused on disciplined forms and fields of knowledge related to education and educational researchers whose knowledge-creation is focused on educational knowledge. The educational knowledge of educational researchers includes insights from the theories, methods and methodologies of education researchers.

Each of the presentations is concerned with practitioners researching to improve educational theory, practice and provision and generating transformational educational knowledge.

Ontological coherence is provided by a commitment to develop knowledge and understanding contributes to professional development, education and the flourishing of humanity. Clarification of the researchers ontological values includes principles of rigor and personal and social validity and responsibility. Epistemological coherence is also provided by a living logic that integrates insights from both propositional and dialectical theories. Epistemological coherence is provided by energy-flowing and living standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of the contributions of educational knowledge. Methodological coherence is provided by a Living-Theory-

Methodology and the use of multimedia narratives to clarify and develop ostensibly the meanings of living standards of judgment.

Supporting Statement

The relevance is that of realizing the vision of BERA to encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for the improvement of educational theory, practice and provision that contributes to the flourishing of humanity. The presentations in the symposium are focused on practitioners, educators and academics researching in international contexts and in Health, Higher Education and community to explain influences in practice, policy and theory.

The validity of the research has been established through the use of Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity by peer review. These criteria concern the comprehensibility, the adequacy of the evidence, the awareness of the normative background and the authenticity, established through time and interaction.

The influences are focused on research that integrates questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice and live my values as fully as I can?' in:

1. Transcending colonizing influences across cultural boundaries.
2. Generating educational knowledge through Living Theory research in a Culture of Inquiry
3. Exploring the implications of supporting educational research for developing professional practice
4. Generating Educational Knowledge through Educational Research.

The influences on policy and practice are focused on the integration of a living-theory approach to continuing professional and educational development and knowledge-creation. The analysis of these influences develops the ideas in the September 2013 issue of *Gifted Education International* (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013):

to ensure the best quality evidence from educational research informs policy makers, practitioners and the general public and contributes to economic prosperity, cultural understanding, social cohesion and personal flourishing (BERA 2014)

The influences on theory are focused on the academic legitimation of the living-educational-theories of practitioner-researchers in Universities and peer-reviewed publications around the world. Contributions to the *Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS)* will also be used to demonstrate the need to provide multi-media narratives in academic journals and other publications for educational researchers, policy makers and the general public. This need is focused on the limitations of printed text-based media for communicating the meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values of educational relationships in explanatory principles of educational influences in learning.

Names of authors and their affiliations:

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i) Je Kan Adler-Collins – Transcending colonizing influences across cultural boundaries.

Background

Working and researching in the UK, Japan and China I am aware of the importance of focusing and sustaining educational conversations on transcending colonizing influences across cultural boundaries, for improving professional practice and generating educational knowledge. This research has focused on the creation of safe-spaces for complementary medicine in the UK; a completed doctoral research programme on the implementation of a curriculum for the healing nurse in Japan, and tutoring and researching at Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. The research has included developing insights into an Ubuntu (Charles, 2007) way of being from South Africa. I now offer insights into the norms that can be used to legitimate the educational knowledge emerging from teaching in higher education and researching my practice as I engage with the colonizing influences in the limited forms of representation used in academic journals of educational research, across cultural boundaries.

Foci

Can cross-cultural standards of judgment be used to legitimate claims to educational knowledge from practitioner-research into improving practice and generating knowledge that transcends colonizing influences?

How can multi-media narratives be used to communicate the meanings of these values-based and energy-flowing standards of judgment?

Methods

Action reflection cycles are used to clarify and communicate the meanings of the energy-flowing and values-laden standards of judgment in the course of their emergence in enquiries into improving professional pedagogical practices in forms of nursing that transcend colonizing influences in understandings of the healing power of touch.

Visual narratives are used with empathetic resonance to clarify and evolve the meanings of these energy-flowing values.

Validation Groups are used to strengthen the validity of the explanations. This includes the integration of the insights I use from the most advanced social theories of the day.

Framing

The presentation is grounded in the expression of inclusive ontological values from a Buddhist perspective. The framing for the generation of knowledge includes both living-educational-theories and living-theory-methodologies.

Findings

The communication of meanings of relationally dynamic standards of judgment, that include flows of energy and values that address colonizing influences across different cultural boundaries and that can transform what counts as educational knowledge in the Academy. This transformation includes the integration of insights from Western, Eastern and African epistemologies.

ii) Jacqueline Delong - Generating educational knowledge through living-theory Action Research in a Culture of Inquiry

Background

Data is drawn from 1996 to 2013 in my years as a superintendent of schools in a school district of 30,000 students in Ontario, Canada, from which I retired in 2007, and my continuing post-doctoral inquiry until the present. During much of this enquiry I was an adjunct professor at Brock University and researched my educational influence as a supervisor of masters degree programmes with teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Foci

Digital technology is used in multi-media narratives for clarifying, communicating and evolving energy-flowing values as explanatory principles and inclusive standards of judgment for judging the validity of claims to educational knowledge.

Methods

Video clips of validation meetings are used to explicate the educational values of 'being loved into learning' and 'democratic evaluation' to which I hold myself accountable. The values are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice with other practitioner-researchers as I research co-operatively to explain how my living-theory action research in a culture of inquiry transforms learning in elementary, high school and post-graduate settings.

Framing

The framing is provided through a particular meaning of the art of living. I focus on the idea that giving form to life itself is a form of art - the art of living. I mean this in the sense that individuals can evaluate their lives in terms of leading lives that are personally flourishing and helping others to do so, too (Reiss & White, 2013, p. 4). Writers such as Fromm (Knapp, 1989) and Foucault (Avgerou & McGrath, 2007) claim that we have lost the art of living. The art of living I have in mind includes the African idea of Ubuntu in the sense that 'I am because we are' and the Indian idea of Sarvodaya in the sense of 'the good of the individual is contained in the good of all'. I also include human flourishing (Reiss & White, 2013) within our meanings of a culture of inquiry.

Findings

These show how the meanings of the values-laden, living standards of judgment of 'being loved into learning' and 'democratic evaluation' from a perspective of inclusionality, require multimedia forms of representation to adequately communicating the meanings.

iii) Marie Huxtable- Exploring the implications of supporting educational research for developing professional practice

Background

Papers in Research Intelligence and BERJ show the continuing confusion between educational and education research and the influence on professional development. For instance, not one of the papers addressing the RI 115 issue's theme, 'Challenge and Change in Teacher Education', acknowledged teachers as knowledge creators and all were concerned with education research, with the result that traditional models of pedagogy continue to be privileged. A new pedagogy and form of research is needed that develops the state of the art of educational research and contributes to the evolution of educational knowledge, practice and provision.

Foci

The purpose of the enquiry is to contribute to the evolution of educational theory, practice and provision through researching my educational practice to improve it.

The questions I am enquiring into are:

- How do I contribute to the transformation of the future for the flourishing of humanity that draws from, but does not recreate the past?
- How do I work cooperatively to support the development of educational researching communities?

Methods

Insights are drawn from a range of methods including narrative approaches to educational research (Cresswell, 2007), action research and autoethnography. It includes a multi-media narrative to explicate the meanings of the energy flowing values and understandings that constitute the explanatory principles of educational influences in the thesis. Rigour is enhanced using the methods advocated by Winter (1989) and social validity is enhanced using the principles advocated by Habermas (1976, 2002).

Framing

The paper draws on:

- Whitehead's (1989, 2008) living theory and living theory methodology.
- Biesta's (2006) ideas on moving beyond a language of learning into a language of education through the exercise of educational responsibility.
- Huxtable's (2012) idea of living theory praxis.

Findings

The significance of the paper is in the contribution it makes to an educational knowledge-base of practice, theory and systemic influence in the development of a new educational epistemology.

The conclusions will focus on identifying the relevance of the findings to educational practitioners seeking to express their educational responsibility by holding themselves to account for improving their practice, and their professional responsibility to contribute to knowledge bases of educational theory, practice and provision.

iv) Jack Whitehead – Generating Educational Knowledge through Educational Research

Background

A symposium at AERA 2012 on ‘Action Research as the Core Of Educational Research’ included the argument that the propositional and dialectical forms of educational knowledge generated by education researchers are not sufficient to serve the public benefit, because these forms of knowing do not necessarily include the lived responsibility of the researcher to engage with improving practice in their professional contexts. Hence the need to focus on the generation of living-educational-theories by educational researchers who necessarily engage with improving practice in enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’.

Focus

The focus is on explicating a new educational epistemology in the original contributions to knowledge of over 40 evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning, of practitioner-researchers, in research degrees that have been legitimated in Universities in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, Canada and Australia over the past 16 years.

Methods

The methods include the use of action reflection cycles, the use of Habermas’ four criteria of social validity in validation groups and the use of empathic resonance, with visual narratives, for clarifying the meanings of the embodied, energy-flowing values that are used as explanatory principles.

Framing

The presentation accepts McTaggart’s perspective about the need to go beyond the de-valuation and de-moralisation of economic rationality. It also accepts Noffke’s perspective about the need 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. It is grounded in Polanyi’s perspective about personal knowledge and responsibility. The perspectives include the East Asian understandings of Inoue of Ba, Omoi, Kizuki, Takumi, Kizuna and Chi. It includes an explicit commitment to explore the implications of living as fully as possible Mandela’s insights about the nature of Ubuntu.

Findings

These are directly related to the aims of BERA in relation to the public benefit. They show that the knowing of educational action researchers, in enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing’, that draw insights from the theories of education researchers, can be both necessary and sufficient to fulfill the aims and can contribute to the overcoming of the power relations that sustain the poverty of

intellectual discourses that eliminate the 'I', the energy-flowing values and the emotions of the researcher from valid claims to educational knowledge.

