

# Exploring the implications of supporting educational research for developing professional practice

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## **Abstract**

The contribution to the symposium this paper makes is in terms of the epistemological significance of Living Theory TASC as a metaphor and heuristic. Living Theory TASC is a synthesis of Living Educational Theory research (Whitehead, 1989, 2014) and TASC (Thinking Actively in A Social Context, Wallace & Adams, 1993, Wallace, 2008). It is offered as one way of comprehending the relationally dynamic and multidimensional nature of Living Educational Theory research. My intention is not to present a template or formula but to engage the creativity of those seeking to live life-affirming and life-enhancing values as fully as possible. Through the expression of this creativity in their evolving living-theories and living-theory methodologies and making public accounts of their research an individual can contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

An argument is offered that the knowledge generated is a contribution to the creation of an educational knowledge base and epistemology as: ontological and relational, life-affirming and life-enhancing, values are clarified and expressed through the account of the practice based research; these values form the living standards of judgement (Laidlaw, 1996) and explanatory principles of the research; and the rationality of the explanations can be understood in terms of their living logic (Whitehead, 2013).

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to an educational knowledge base and an educational epistemology, which is consistent with the *raison d'être* of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) as expressed in the statement of 2014 that BERA:

'... 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.

The research presented here is grounded in an enquiry to improve support of educational research for developing professional practice and evolved in response to questions such as:

- 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?

I draw on and extend ideas of Living Educational Theory praxis, living-boundaries, inclusive gifted and talented education developed from an educational perspective and Living-Theory TASC, offered in my doctoral thesis (Huxtable, 2012). I draw on and integrate what I have learned from: the literature; educational and research conversations with practitioner-researchers wanting, like me, to improve their values-based praxis and with students I have supported; and validated living-theory accounts such as those which can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net> and <http://www.ejolts.net>.

In the paper that follows I begin with a conceptual clarification. I then describe and explain Living Theory TASC as a metaphor and heuristic. Next I present an argument that the educational knowledge generated is a contribution to the evolution of an educational epistemology before proffering a few concluding thoughts on what I have learned in the process of developing and offering this account, which will become part of the complex ecologies of my ongoing research.

## **Conceptual clarification**

### *Language and metaphor*

Educational research, knowledge and epistemology require a language that communicates their educational nature. The evolution of a language is integral to the evolution of thought and ways of being. Lakoff (2004) shows that the words we use can embed metaphors of particular values systems and worldviews, which are brought more into being by the words we choose to communicate with. For instance 'impact indicators', 'high-stakes tests' and 'value added' evoke deep frames of a mechanistic worldview and values of economic rationalism.

Lakoff (1993) also points out that, 'The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason.' (p. 208). Metaphors, like words, can transform unnoticed, from a means for sharing and creating generative and transformational understandings, to defining and confining thinking and action and informing them as they are brought into being. For instance, a language of learning, comprising words, metaphor and various manners of communicating, is being developed to replace a language of education which has, possibly unintended, consequences, as Biesta points out when he writes:

'Learning theorists of both an individualistic and a sociocultural bent have developed a range of accounts of how learning – or more precisely, how the process of learning – takes place. Although they differ in their description and explanation of the process, for example, by focusing on processes in the brain or legitimate peripheral participation, many of such accounts assume that learning has to do with the acquisition of something

“external,” something that existed before the act of learning and that, as a result of learning, becomes the possession of the learner.’ (Biesta, 2006, p. 26)

In this paper I am distinguishing learning as a process of creation and not simply one of acquisition. The creative learning process I am particularly concerned with is educational, by which I mean learning concerned with what enables a person to come to know themselves and live their life, informed by their values, as fully as possible and realise their best intent.

By ‘best intent’ I mean the values-based hope that is the fuel of living a loving, satisfying, productive, worthwhile life, which makes this a better world for us all. That is not the same as what is in a person’s ‘best interest’, which is to do with what might be best for the individual and may or may not include consideration for anyone else. It can be challenging to support the other to realise their best intent when it is not in their best interest. Lifton (1988) gives an account of Korczak, a Polish-Jewish children’s author and paediatrician, who, during the second world war, chose to accompany the children in his care to Treblinka against the advice of his friends. His actions were an expression of his best intent but as that led to certain death they were by no means in his best interest.

I qualify my use of the word ‘values’ here to mean those that are life-affirming and life-enhancing as I realise that some people have values that give meaning and purpose to their lives that are only self-serving. Crompton (2010), drawing on Schwartz shows how we may each hold values that at times results in us living contradictions in our practice and lives.

To contribute to the development of a language of education I offer a notion of living-boundaries as co-creative spaces formed between worlds, such as of self or practice, within which energy-flowing values can be clarified and communicated. A living-boundary can be represented by ‘~’ (Whitehead and Huxtable, 2006). It is a trustworthy, inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian space for creating and gifting knowledge: A respectful and trustworthy space for learning journeys and/or adventures to be embarked on cooperatively, collaboratively or alongside (Pound, 2003) individuals or collectives. A living-boundary is formed between people entering with a hope of co-creating new knowledge that contributes to the flourishing of humanity. By making the knowledge created public it is offered, not imposed, as a gift with the hope that it may have a generative and transformational influence on the persons and worlds that form the living-boundary.

The social and personal nature of living-boundaries is well expressed by Delong as she offers her account of evolving understandings of a culture-of-inquiry (DeLong, 2002) with tenets of vulnerability, democracy, loving kindness and loved into learning (DeLong, 2014). The cultural nature of the complex ecology of living-boundaries is expressed in an account of Living Global Citizenship (Coombs, Potts, Whitehead, 2014) by the authors and by Adler-Collins who researches his practice to transcend colonising influences as a nurse, educator and Buddhist priest living his values in diverse contexts (Adler-Collins 2007).

I also offer a notion of 'Living Theory praxis' (Huxtable, 2012). The phrase, Living Theory praxis, is intended to make explicit an integration of the creation of knowledge of the world with knowledge of self in and of the world, in living-boundaries, informed and formed in a relational dynamic, mediated by ontological, relational energy-flowing life-affirming and life-enhancing values. It might be argued that Living Theory praxis is a tautology. However, while Living Theory may express a particular form of understanding of praxis, not all praxis may be in the form of a living-educational-theory. So, in the same way I talk of 'a gift freely offered' to emphasis that what I offer is done so without expectation or obligation, I talk of Living Educational Theory praxis to emphasise that:

- My praxis as a living-theory is a form of self-study where 'i' is not an egotistical 'I' or a discrete entity. The 'i' researched is the ontological and relational self and is a recognition of a person as a real, living, unique human being and that they have an influence by being.
- An account of praxis communicates how the researcher hold themselves to account for their educational influence and for having an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian influence that enhances well-being and well-becoming of each and all.
- It includes an explanation of how they give full expression to their educational responsibility for themselves and towards other people and communities.
- The embodied knowledge and values of the researcher are clarified and evolve as they emerge and are articulated through the process of rigorous and valid enquiry in living-boundaries.
- The life-affirming and life-enhancing ontological and social values of the researchers, form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of educational influence in learning and life of self, other and social formations.
- Praxis is created in the living-boundary, the ~ space between worlds, for instance, of the individual and a collective (i~we), fields of practice and theory (practice~theorising), and student and the educational practitioner in an educational relationship (student~educator).

As I developed my living-theory praxis I came to appreciate the importance of recognising and affirming each individual's presence and contribution (including my own) to the experience and learning of the collective. Unfortunately there is only one lexical representation in English of self, that of 'I'. I use 'i' to try to communicate a notion of self that is not egotistical, isolated, isolating and self serving, but a self that is concerned with recognising, valuing and enhancing their unique contribution to the flourishing of humanity as communicated in the phrases, 'i am because we are', and 'we are because i am', held together. For instance 'i' and 'we' in 'i~we' indicate that self and collective is neither subordinate nor superordinate, but exist in an inclusive, emancipating, egalitarian relationship. It is a similar sense I make of Ubuntu that Nelson Mandela expresses in this brief (1.37) video clip. 'Respect, helpfulness, sharing, community, caring, trust, unselfishness', come up on the screen followed by, 'One word can mean so much.' At 0.19 Tim Modise introduces the interview with, 'Many people consider you as a personification of Ubuntu. What do you understand Ubuntu to be?' It is not just reading the few words that Mandela speaks that I understand Ubuntu but it is through the intonation of his

voice, his body and his way of being that communicates Ubuntu personified in these few seconds of video.



**Video 1 Nelson Mandela on Ubuntu <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODQ4WiDsEBQ>**

### *Educational professional practice*

The educational purpose of education is taken here to be concerned with enabling each student to take and express their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and the social formations within which they live and work. Practice can be understood as educational, not so much by what a practitioner does but by the explanation they give for why they do what they do. For instance, while working as an educational psychologist leading a local authority inclusive gifted education project I wrote:

'Why do I do what I do? I want children to grow as people who are comfortable in their own skin, knowing themselves, liking themselves, at peace with themselves, knowing what they want to work on, to improve, and to have the courage to change and accept their own stumbling and that of other people as part of the journey.

I believe that an individual learns what they see themselves capable of learning and what is of value to them. The striving for excellence seems to carry with it a hope of personal fulfilment and when that personal ambition coincides with the needs of others, carries with it a hope for the progression of all of us and 'twice affirmation' for the individual. I believe people (young and old) grow their understandings and create valued knowledge through dialogue with themselves and others.

I contend that my practice at that time could be understood and judged as educational by my intention to contribute to the growth of children and young people as educated persons. I believe educational practice is not just concerned with bringing a student to new and deeper understanding of him/herself and of the nature of his/her relationship to other people. It is also to enable them to develop the skills, talents, expertise and knowledge so they can take action to continually enhance their educational influence in their own learning and life and that of others. I also contend that my practice can be understood as educational by evidence that I am having an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian influence that enhances well-being and well-becoming of each and all. It is explanations rooted in such live-affirming and life-enhancing ontological and relational values that distinguish practice as educational.

Working as a senior educational psychologist responsible for implementing policy on high ability learning, I experienced the following concerns: Practice, theory and research often appeared to lose connection with the purpose of education; Theory and practice appeared to be developed independently, and without explanation or evaluation related to values of education; Those involved with education appeared to be in discrete worlds, each vying to exert their hegemony over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision.

Through creating my living-theory doctoral thesis I came to understand that as an educational professional I had not just a responsibility for developing my practice. I also had a responsibility to learn from and with others, as individuals and collectives, and to make a contribution to the learning of others and the growth of an educational knowledge base and epistemology.

As my research into my professional practice developed I clarified and evolved meanings of my ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society of my values, as they emerged within living-boundaries through the evolution of my living-theory praxis, to form explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in my claim to know my practice.

### *Educational research*

As an educational practitioner researching to develop professional practice I engage in Living Theory research. I use capitals to distinguish Living Theory research from an individual's living-theory. In doing so I am pointing to Living Theory as an identifiable research paradigm, methodology and method, established internationally over some 40 years as legitimate academic research, with a coherent philosophical underpinning, which practitioner-researchers draw on and contribute to (see <http://www.ejolts.net> for examples).

I research to create and offer accounts of my living-theories in order to develop my professional educational practice as my living-theory praxis. In the process of researching, a variety of methods, such as Narrative Enquiry, Action Research and Autoethnography, and Case Study, are commonly employed as well as quantitative methods, and insights are drawn and integrated

from the disciplines, including the psychology, philosophy, sociology and history of education. Rigour is enhanced using the methods advocated by Winter (1989) and social validity is enhanced using the principles advocated by Habermas (1976).

Living Theory is a form of self-study practitioner-research whereby the researcher researches questions that are important to them and in the process generates values-based explanations for their educational influence in learning, their own, other people's and of social formations (Whitehead, 1989). They do this by clarifying their values, as they emerge and evolve in the process of enquiry, which form their explanatory principles and living standards of judgement in valid accounts of their practice. The values are those that are ontological, relational, energy-flowing, life-affirming and life-enhancing, and as Crompton (2010) describes, are a 'better source of motivation for engaging in bigger-than-self problems than other values' (p.9). The unit of appraisal is their living-theories and a living logic (Whitehead, 2013) distinguishes the rationality of explanations.

It is the generation of valid values-based explanations of practice as contributions to developing an educational knowledge base and epistemology that is the purpose of educational research and one of the expectations of a professional practitioner.

I distinguish between education research and *educational* research but I am not intending to imply that one form of research is more important than another. Rather I want to enable them to be held in a more productive relationship with respect to generating knowledge that improves the quality of the educational experience of people in school and higher education establishments.

Whitty (2005) made this distinction between educational research and education research:

'In this paper, I have so far used the broad term education research to characterize the whole field, but it may be that within that field we should reserve the term educational research for work that is consciously geared towards improving policy and practice...'  
(pp.13-14)

I think there is something more that distinguishes educational research from research in education than the politics of power between 'pure' and 'applied' research.

Pring (2000), like Whitehead (1989), distinguishes research in education as constituted by the disciplines of education. Pring goes on to say:

'Central to educational research, therefore, is the attempt to make sense of the activities, policies and institutions which, through the organization of learning, help to transform the capacities of people to live a fuller and more distinctively human life. Such research needs to attend to what is distinctive of being a person – and of being one in a more developed sense. It needs to recognize that the 'what' and the 'how' of learning those distinctively human capacities and understandings are by no means simple – they need

to be analysed carefully. And a fortiori 'teaching', through which that learning is brought about, will reflect that complexity.' (p.17, Pring's emphasis)

While Pring points to the importance of research recognising, '... the 'what' and the 'how' of learning...', he makes no reference to the 'why' of the person doing the learning. This might account for Pring's reference to values giving no sense of the living reality of '... being a person...' as a unique individual learning to live their own life as fully as possible, rather than an abstract 'distinctively human life'.

Elliott claims to have, in 1978:

'... coined a distinction between 'Research on Education' and Educational Research'. I was drawing attention to the difference between viewing research into teaching and learning as a form of ethical inquiry aimed at realizing the educational good, and viewing it as a way of constructing knowledge about teaching and learning that is detached from the researcher's own personal constructs of educational value. Educational Research, I argued is carried out with the practical intention of changing a situation to make it more educationally worthwhile.' (Elliott, 2009, p.28)

However, although making reference indirectly to values, in citing the ethical nature of educational inquiry and referring to the 'educational good', it is as a detached commentator on what is 'educationally worthwhile'. I do not believe I should ascribe to myself the power that such approaches require.

This is in contrast to Whitehead's (1989) notion of educational research as research concerned with learning that enhances the ability of a (real) person learning to live their life-affirming values as fully as they can. The embodied values Whitehead is concerned with are those life-affirming and life-enhancing ontological and relational values that give meaning and purpose to an individual's life, clarified and evolved in the process of researching and theorising their educational influences in learning, life and improving practice.

Whitehead distinguishes between education research and educational research with respect to the disciplines as Pring does, but goes further to distinguish what is educational research by reference to the nature of values that provide explanatory principles and standards of judgment and the knowledge and theory generated as the educator seeks to account for their educational influence. I find Whitehead's (1989) notion of 'educational influence' is far more nuanced than a language of cause and effect, impact indicators and the like.

I can tell you I understand something as educational if it contributes towards the development of educated people (as individuals and collectively) and the flourishing of humanity; that I understand an educated person to be someone who knows him or her self in the process of learning to live a loving, satisfying, productive, and worthwhile life for themselves and others; that what is educational is concerned with people evolving the expression of their humanity in their lives and practice and recognising, valuing and making their unique contribution to the well-



being of each and all of us. However, words alone are not sufficient to communicate subtle essence of the meaning of educational influence.

Eisner (1997) said:

'How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know? Those questions and how we explore them can help redefine what educational research means, how it is pursued, and what we can learn from it. It can enlarge our discourse and widen our conceptions.' (p. 9)

I believe that the forms of evidence needed include video to help communicate the relationally dynamic, multidimensional and very human nature of educational values. This brings me to clarifying meanings of an educational knowledge base and epistemology.

### *Educational knowledge base and educational epistemology*

Building on the argument I have constructed so far, of meanings of educational practice and research, I offer my understanding of what constitutes an educational knowledge base and meanings of an educational epistemology.

An educational knowledge base comprises knowledge that is created in the process of a person making sense of their experiences of their extra, inter and intra personal worlds with the intention of giving expression to their best intent in their educational practice. For accounts of educational knowledge to be recognised as being beyond anecdote and opinion the knowledge creator needs to show that the account they offer is both reasonable and well reasoned.

Contributors to knowledge bases in the Western academic world are familiar with having to present a well reasoned case but do not often address the issue of how their accounts can be understood as 'reasonable'. The 'reasonableness' of educational knowledge can only be understood given sufficient insights into the social, cultural and historical extra, inter and intra personal complex ecologies of the researcher and their embodied values; values that form the explanatory principles and standards of judgment of the lives of the person creating and communicating their knowledge with an intention of educationally influencing the learning and lives of others.

To understand the knowledge offered something of the knowledge creator has to be understood as Collingwood said:

'I began by observing that you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.' (Collingwood, 1991, p.31).

Quinn describes this as decentring:

'It is the achievement whereby I learn what it is that you need to hear or experience in order to share what is in my mind, whether it be a question, an idea or a supportive anecdote.' (Quinn, 1997, p.86).

Bell (1998) put the challenge of enquiring into what is 'reasonable' well in his paper:

'We often do not take ourselves seriously; often we do not reflect adequately upon our social context (the baggage we bring in and the contrast which we perceive) and we have problems in recognising the complexity of the environmental context...

Reality is complex and no single view will be adequate to explain the nature of the complexity within and around us.

In quoting Donald Schön, Chambers (1997 p.190) says,

"In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. Shall he [sic] remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigour, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous enquiry?"

The evolving paradigm turns this on its head, as Schön perhaps would wish. His high ground describes the conditions of normal professionalism, but a new professionalism is taking over. The imagery is upended: the swamp becomes the new high ground. In the new paradigm of understanding, the "swamp" or mess becomes the primary ground of understanding and learning. The challenges for the researcher grow; the sense of vulnerability and anxiety (as well as excitement) grows. Non-self-reflective practitioners have for many years focused on the manageable and the limited type of problem on which their discipline focuses...' (pp. 181-182).

Living-theories, as contributions to creating an educational epistemology, as called for by Schön (1995), offer a way of researching to create knowledge in the complex ecology wherein '... lie the problems of greatest human concerns'.

The validity of living-educational-theories are judged by a validation group against criteria developed from Habermas (1976) by Whitehead (2014), which help to illuminate rather than eliminate the complexity of such problems:

- How could I improve the comprehensibility of my writings?
- How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify the assertions (claims to know something) that I make?
- How could I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of these influences in my activities and writings?
- How could I enhance the authenticity of my writings in the sense of showing over time and interaction that I am truly committed to living my ontological and relational values as fully as I can?

I add to these questions two more:

- Do I offer a well-reasoned and reasonable explanation of why I do what I do?
- As you engage with this account, has your imagination been stimulated and might those thoughts contribute anything to your educational journey as you seek to improve your educational contexts and relationships?

Educational knowledge does not only have to be 'reasonable' it also has to be well reasoned, that is, rational with a logic that is comprehensible. The dominating logics in the Western Academy social sciences are those of Aristotle or Socrates, which are not sufficient each of themselves to provide a rationale for generating accounts of educational knowledge. Educational knowledge requires a different logic; a form of logic that is concerned with the knowledge created by human beings being human, learning what is for them to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for themselves and others. Such a form of logic is, I think, better understood in other traditions, such as the Chinese, but the closest I have found in the Western Academy is that of a living logic (Whitehead, 2013, 2014)

An epistemology is concerned with what is known, how we know what we know, the unit of appraisal, the logic that distinguishes its rationality, and standards of judgment. The epistemological implications of accounts of educational knowledge are understood by, the unit of appraisal, the standard of judgments, and the living logics, of living-educational-theories.

Having set the scene by clarifying the concepts I am using I offer an account of Living Theory TASC evolving as metaphor and heuristic for supporting educational research for developing professional practice. I will draw on this account in the argument I go on to present that the knowledge generated is a contribution to an educational epistemology.

### **Living Theory TASC**

To help me make sense of a Living Theory research process I have developed Living Theory TASC as a metaphor and heuristic. This is a synthesis of Living Theory research (Whitehead,

1989, 2009) and TASC (Thinking in A Social Context, Wallace, 2008). A distinguishing feature of Living Theory TASC is that it makes visible the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases of research and practice. Living Theory TASC also enables a researcher to recognise, value and work with the knowledge they create of themselves, and themselves in and of the world, in the process of researching to create knowledge of the world. Living Theory TASC can be employed by learners of all ages, whether they are young learners researching their passions or adults researching to improve their practice.

Creating and making public, valid accounts of the knowledge created is an integral aspect of Living Theory TASC research. Sometimes, the gift of that knowledge may be offered to an unknown other in the living-boundary between self and other worlds, for instance as a published paper and as a contribution to a knowledge base or to the evolution of an epistemology. At other times, it may be offered to a few people in a negotiated space. Wherever the gift of knowledge is eventually offered, the creation of a research account that can communicate beyond self, offers an opportunity to deepen and evolve learning and research. Text alone is often not sufficient to communicate educational knowledge: A multi-media narrative is often needed to explicate the meanings of the energy flowing values and understandings that constitute explanatory principles, standards of judgment and the nature of educational influences.

The research narratives of improving educational practice are arrived at through an organic process, birthed and evolved through flowing, complex interconnecting relationships and experiences. However, to communicate a practitioner-researcher has to provide a narrative with their ideas ordered systematically (Carter, 1993). Creating an account is often thought of by social scientists as simply concerned with 'writing up' the research whereas In Living Theory research creating an account is recognised as an integral part of the research. There is something important to be learned in talking the walk, and articulating thoughts clearly enough to create an account that communicates to others beyond the moment. In the process of creating and offering a living-theory account a person can come to recognise, value and enhance the knowledge they have created beyond what is possible when it remains ephemeral and unarticulated, or intuitive and subconscious. To create such an account, however, takes energy and energy is often consumed by the stresses and strains of dealing with daily living. As a consequence creating a research account may often be relegated to the backburner, waiting for that fanciful 'when I have time', which never comes. A spur is often needed. Making a commitment to creating an account for a purpose by a deadline, such as submitting an account for accreditation, publication or presentation, can provide the impetus for deepening learning and expressing the professional responsibility of an educator to contribute to the growth of the professional knowledge base.

Living Theory research is not a linear process and neither is creating a living-theory account. Where to start, how to proceed and how can I express my educational responsibility to students engaged in Living Theory research in a way that is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian? Questions such as these gave rise to the notion of Living Theory TASC as a way of understanding the multidimensional and relationally dynamic process of Living Theory research.

It comprises a synthesis of what I have learned of TASC (Thinking Actively in A Social Context, Wallace and Adams, 1993, Wallace, 2008) and what I have learned of Living Theory in the process of creating and offering living-theory accounts and supporting students working on accredited programmes, It incorporates multimedia narratives as a means of recognising, understanding and communicating energy-flowing values and enables me to see where I might draw on other research methods such as Action Research, Autoethnography, Narrative Enquiry, Critical Theory and so on.

Creating Living Theory TASC as a metaphor has been an evolutionary process, which started when I created an account for accreditation as a Masters unit (Huxtable, 2006). In telling some of that evolving story I hope you might be able to better understand Living Theory TASC as a useful explanation of a fluid, dynamic process for enhancing your own Living Theory research.

In 2006 I wrote:

*Thoughts on enquiry procedures – giving form to the fog which invites, but does not impose structure*

I have been increasingly puzzled as to how the middle of TASC connected to the process of enquiry in a way that was not a continual round of stop and start, and how the individual grew in a social context without imposition; the same problem exists with the procedures mapped out in other methodologies as shown in appendix 5.

I have seen circles, spirals and loops in descriptions of the enquiry process but they all leave me with the problem of how to connect the ends and the middle?

Circles do not connect through a flow form, no matter how you rearrange them. They are closed and lead us to see what they represent as discrete rather than distinct; we move from one disconnected bit of the curriculum in school to another, one exciting experience to another, the curriculum is separated out from well being. Open circles in the form of spirals and loops are no better and literally end up with loose ends.

The articulation with the Monday conversation group around, the movement Jack identified between Sue and myself in the video, the reflection in the movement of one with another we could see in Alan Rayner's illustration of inclusionality, the energy of shared laughter... and the niggling problem of circles grew a new understanding that moved me from the constraints of a wheel, through the non connection of a spiral to a mathematical knot!

A three dimensional mathematical knot, connecting the individual into the social to extend the skill, understanding and values and then sweep back up to connect through the centre to the evolving enquiry.

What sort of knot I don't know and art and maths are not my strong points as you might have gathered, but both Alan Rayner and John Wadsworth at the Bath Monday

Conversation recognised the shape as a zero spiral from my attempts to represent it through drawing and movement; the movement is important.



Figure 1 Zero spiral knot



Figure 2 Smokey trefoil not relaxed

The trefoil is close but not quite right; but you get the drift. I particularly like this knot because of its title '*smokey trefoil, not relaxed*' from the knotplot site. <http://www.pims.math.ca/knotplot/se/radtubes.html>. I even like the introduction to the page '*The notion of deriving a knot energy by viewing a knot as a radiating tube ...*' It seems to capture the flavour of what I am trying to express.

Now I can see how I can connect, in a generative way, my learning in collaboration with others, moving through 'learn from experience', which includes my learning related to my values as well as skills, and which sweeps up through the centre and connects with a renewed flow of enquiry.

This evolved to incorporate other metaphors such as this one I began my thesis with (Huxtable, 2012)



Figure 3 Arrows used to illustrate traditional social science research

We might agree the energy as explored in physics exists, flows and takes various forms, such as light and heat. It requires small particles distributed as smoke, and energy in the form of light, for us to explore and communicate energy as heat, which is otherwise invisible to the human eye. The smoke and light help us communicate and research the energy present. Particles and flows of energy are distinct but cannot be properly understood if we try to treat them as discrete and independent.'

'If the picture of the arrows serves as a metaphor for many social science approaches to researching in education, then the second picture, of the swirling smoke, can be understood as a metaphor for educational/ research approaches concerned with multidimensional, relationally-dynamic, energy-flowing values.



Figure 4 Smoke used to illustrate flows of energy in research as a living process – picture by

[Salvatore Vuono / FreeDigitalPhotos.net](http://www.freeDigitalPhotos.net)

It was not until I came to work on an account of my thesis to submit for examination that I came to develop further metaphors to represent the living logic (Whitehead, 2013, 2014) of Living Theory research in a way that the research process was comprehensible as a rational but not defining approach to research and developing praxis. This I called Living Theory TASC to stand for a process that:

- Holds together the organic and systematic phases of educational research in a relationally-dynamic multidimensional manner;
- Connects research to create knowledge of the world, with educational research to create knowledge of self and self in and of the world.

I represented the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases. The circle at the top of the drawing shown below (Figure 5) represents the systematic phase with interconnections and with the organic phase represented beneath. They are distinct but not discrete phases.



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Figure 5 Relationship between organic and systematic phases of research

Through engaging with TASC and Living-Theory research, I have come to understand and describe the relationally-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases of Living Theory research as a disciplined, yet fluid, process of enquiry that is comprehensible to children and adults. It is an expression of a pedagogy that resonates with me and enables someone as researcher and student to recognise, value and work with the knowledge they create of themselves, and themselves in and of the world, in the process of researching to create knowledge of the world. I contend that Living-Theory TASC can be employed by learners of all ages, whether they are young learners researching their passions or adults researching to improve their practice.

This is the action reflection cycle described by Whitehead (1989) I draw on:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What am I going to do about it?
- What data will I gather to help me to judge my effectiveness?



How does the data help me to clarify the meanings of my embodied values as these emerge in practice?

What values-based explanatory principles do I use to explain my educational influence?

How do I use my values-based standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of my claims to be improving my practice?

How will I strengthen the validity of my values-based explanations of my educational influences in learning?

The diagram below (Figure 6) shows the steps of enquiry of TASC



Figure 6 Steps of enquiry in the TASC approach (Wallace et al., 2004)

The diagrammatic representation of TASC (Wallace et al., 2004) is attractive, neat and colourful. However, the children working with Joy Mounter (2007) told Belle Wallace (the originator of TASC) it does not communicate the multidimensional, interrelated flow that is the actuality of their learning. The children built a model (Figure 7) to communicate such a flow of energy. They used colour to show the flow, and represented the learning and knowledge created erupting up through the centre, the heart of the enterprise, as a shower of sparks on what is in the present and future.



Figure 7 Joy Mounter's pupils' model of their learning (Mounter, 2007)

Joy Mounter gives a more extensive explanation in her Masters unit, understanding learners and learning (Mounter, 2007) and I would urge you to read it. The key points I want to make here are shown in the videos Joy provides in the appendix showing the children critiquing TASC and creating their own learning theories (access at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH2-5xexbAQ>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tj4syOrIDdY> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSqg1phEEaM>) Educators who have watched the videos are consistently stunned at the sophistication of the children's thinking and their ability to articulate their learning theory in the process of creation as they critique TASC. These children are only 6-7 years of age and recognise the multidimensional, relationally-dynamic, flow of learning, which is not appreciated in most of the two-dimensional, linear text-based representations of the 'grand theories'. Joy wrote:

'The children I had in my class last year consider themselves expert learners, beyond their age, they are confident to lead others and share their thoughts. We have called them 'Learning Coaches'. The children and I were invited to share our experiences at a day's training on TASC run by Belle Wallace. The children weren't worried, rather pleased and excited to be sharing their 'learning'. Photographs were taken and even a video recording made of their thoughts of the TASC Wheel. This is an incredible short extract of the children developing their thinking, expressing their reflections and clarifying their ideas to develop an adults 'learning theory'. (Please see appendices two) By expressing their thoughts and feelings to adults, the children felt a sense of value as having something important to say. They received an e-mail from her thanking them and asking for photographs and more details of their work. They glowed.'

In the picture below, you can just see Joy as she listens carefully to the children. She has taken them into her confidence about her own intention of learning with and from them. These 15 minutes on a Friday afternoon can only have happened in the context of the relationship she has already developed with them, the language, skills and understanding of learning they have developed with her support and involvement over time. I hear in her voice an honest respect for the children as valued creators of knowledge as she checks with them what they are meaning. This is the first of three clips where you can see the ideas move between the children. Each responds in a way that is meaningful to them and enables them to communicate with the others.



Figure 8 Joy with pupils creating their learning theory <http://tinyurl.com/3ogda8w>

“...then you get the question in your head... it is actually the questions you might need to answer not exactly the answers ‘cause you need to think sometimes for yourself.”

I do not believe that a transcript of the videos would adequately communicate either the dynamic quality of the learning theory they are creating or the educational qualities of the space they are contributing to. I ask if you see what I see as you run the cursor back and forth as you watch the video in QuickTime. I believe I see the dynamic relational qualities of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility expressed.

By 2008 I was able to represent the systematic phase of Living Theory research as a multidimensional zero-spiral knot illustrated in a 2D representation in Figure 9.

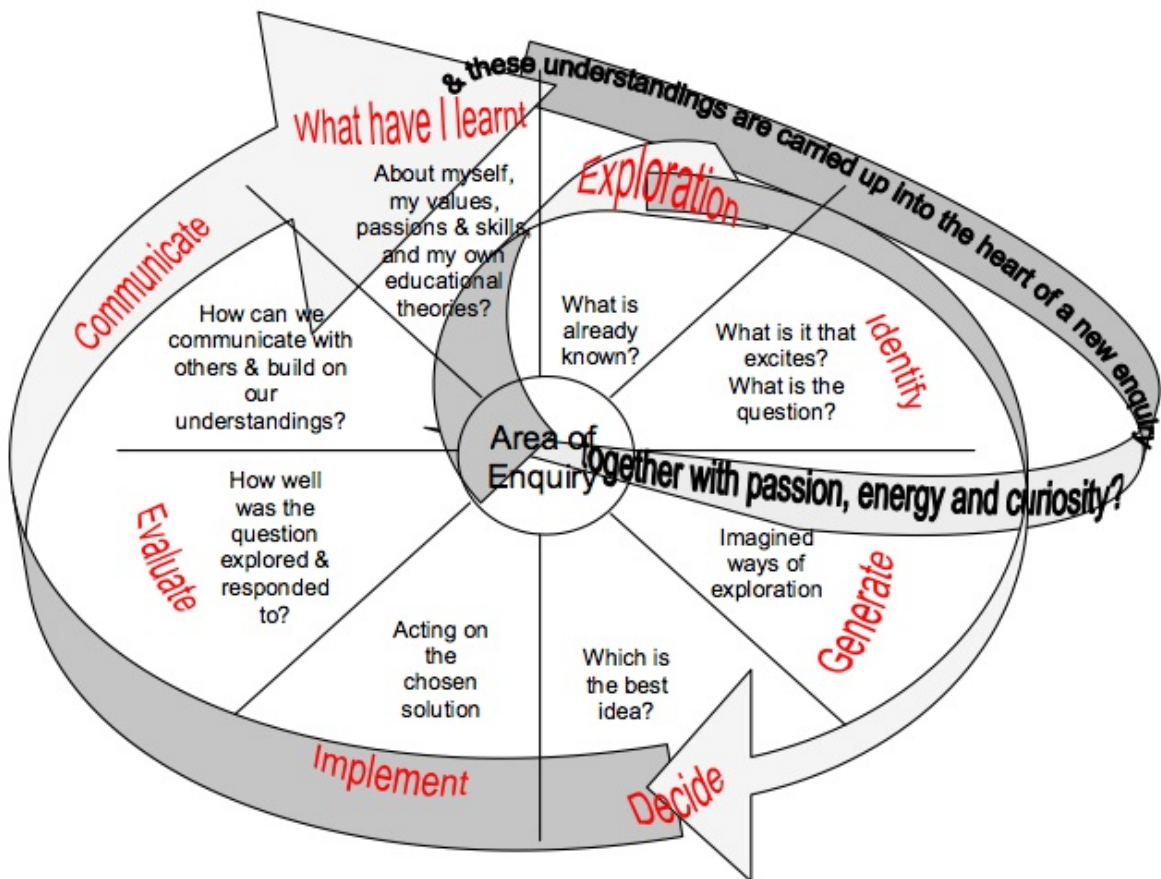


Figure 9 Living Theory TASC knot (Huxtable, 2008)

In presenting this diagram I do not wish to imply that this is a procedure to be followed in a step-by-step fashion to create a living-theory. Medawar (1969) points out this error:

‘...scientific ‘papers’ in the form in which they are communicated to learned journals are notorious for misrepresenting the processes of thought that led to whatever discoveries they describe.’ (p. 8)

As I have said, Living Theory research comprises an organic as well as a systematic phase. The features of the Living Theory TASC knot are evident but in the organic phase I may at various times, or at the same time be able to locate my activities in many different areas. For instance, I may be gathering and organising what is known in a field, implementing one or more plans of action, or clarifying my concern. I may use qualitative and quantitative methods developed by social scientists, and draw on theories and knowledge developed by academics and practitioners in various fields and disciplines.

When do you move from the organic phase to the systematic phase? I think the motivation often comes from a desire or a need to create and offer an account of the knowledge you have

created of the explanations of educational influences in learning you have had so your knowledge might contribute to the evolution of the knowledge base of your world of practice. I think in the process of learning how to communicate to and with others knowledge is created in the living-boundary between self and others. The contradictions experienced and the challenges of using a language of other worlds that can be shared form tensions that can be worked with creatively.

Sonia Hutchinson and Paul Falkus (both members of the CPD/Masters group I supported) inspired my notions of learning journeys and learning adventures. To travel without a predefined destination I conceptualise as an adventure, whereas to travel with a destination, even if very vague, I conceptualise as a journey. An adventure provides the openness to as yet unimagined possibilities, and journeys may enable the adventure to evolve rather than stagnate. A learning adventure that does not integrate learning and knowledge created and acquired on the journeys may become sterile, repetitive and superficial. I will not go further with those metaphors here, but will leave you to play with them to see if this helps you understand what I am trying to communicate of researching to improve my praxis formed and informed by the complex ecologies of my practice and being. Living Theory researchers embrace and recognise the value of knowledge created in learning adventures as well as learning journeys and enrich and progress this knowledge in the systematic phase when they create and test the validity of their living-theory as a contribution to evolving an educational epistemology.

So, where to begin researching to create your living-theory? Whitehead often encourages people to begin think of something they want to improve and to begin to clarify their thoughts through an action reflection cycle and/or to produce a short autobiographical account of events that are important to them and might help them and others understand their ontological and social values. He also encourages people to share whatever is interesting, puzzling, annoying, exciting... them or focussing their attention in the moment, whether that be something they have read, an experience on holiday, a birth, a death, a report they are working on... So I think an answer to 'where do I start' is to encourage you to begin by foregrounding what is energising you and to trust that something important will emerge. Collingwood (1991) describes something of the fog and struggle with which I empathise, and how he began a new enquiry:

'There came upon me by degrees, after this, a sense of being burdened with a task whose nature I could not define except by saying, 'I must think.' What I was to think about I did not know; and when, obeying this command I fell silent and absent-minded in company, or sought solitude in order to think without interruption, I could not have said, and still cannot say, what it was that I actually thought. There were no particular questions that I asked myself; there were no special objects upon which I directed my mind; there was only a formless and aimless intellectual disturbance; as if I were wrestling with a fog.

I know now that this is what always happens when I am in the early stages of work on a problem. Until the problem has gone a long way towards being solved, I do not know

what it is; all I am conscious of is this vague perturbation of mind, this sense of being worried about I cannot say what.’ (pp.4-5)

Rather than trying to impose structure and define a route, I have found that, like Collingwood, allowing myself to be in the fog and writing about what comes to mind at that time often seems to clarify what is important. That then becomes part of the research, even if it does not seem to give rise directly and immediately to the formulation of research questions. The research question that does finally emerge is not one located in an idealised world of tomorrow, which never happens, but in the here- and-now, given all the constraints and tensions of the real world, of which we are a part of and wish to improve.

A first hurdle for someone new to Living Theory research is to resist a tendency to only see ‘action’ as having value. In the English culture that I live and work in, thinking, theorising and creating new possibilities to contribute to the evolution of a world in which humanity flourishes, are subordinated to ‘getting the job done’ as judged against economic and materialistic standards, and explanations which are impersonal and disembodied. The standards of judgment of Living Theory research by contrast include the researchers embodied life-affirming and life-enhancing values, which also form the explanatory principles of the research. These values are clarified as they emerge in the course of the research. The research itself is a living process and as such has neither beginning nor end but times when, to borrow from Schön’s metaphor, we scramble onto a tussock in the swamp of the organic process of living and learning to recognise, value and work with the knowledge we have created through a systematic, yet still creative, process to produce a valid and communicable account of our living-theory. This communicable account is what I am calling a ‘readerly narrative’. I am saying ‘readerly narrative’ rather than what I have previously described as a ‘readerly text’ to emphasis that such an account will probably incorporate other forms of communication as well as text to enable the ‘reader’ to understand the meanings of energy-flowing ontological and relational values.

This paper is in the form of a ‘readerly narrative’: a multimedia narrative, to communicate the knowledge I have created educationally. By that I mean I want to communicate in such a way that my account of my living-theory stimulates the imagination of readers in a manner that enhances their own learning and research. To create a ‘readerly narrative’ I begin by creating a ‘writerly narrative’. I create a writerly narrative in the first place not with a view to what the readerly narrative may be but to enable me to recognise, value and work with the knowledge I have created in the process of researching to improve my living-theory praxis.

I am concerned in the first place with the role and purpose of creating the account for the creator. I am using the phrases ‘readerly narrative’ and ‘writerly narrative’ as I have understood them from observing Jack Whitehead’s use of the phrases ‘readerly text’ and ‘writerly text’ as he has supported Masters and Doctoral students researching and making their embodied knowledge public. The beginning of these writerly texts invariably begins with Jack urging “write about what is important to you”, and then, “keep writing until you have written yourself out”. This writing often includes incidences of childhood that have influenced the development of their

values as well as current concerns. The researcher is encouraged to share these early writings within the educational research group. When the work is articulated it enables the researcher and others to share and learn from their responses. This co-operative enquiry often helps each person to clarify their ontological values as they emerge in the living- boundary between what is private and personal. It is an important movement for many, when they move from solitary introspection to having the confidence and trust in themselves and others to offer their not knowing in the living boundary, between i~we. This is the point in the TASC process concerned with 'communicating to and with others', and 'what have I learned about myself and my self in and of the world as I have enquired'. As the writings and a focus begins to emerge the researcher draws in work created in the organic phase of their research.

In the organic phase numerous multimedia narratives and stories may be created, variously as time, stimulated by commitments, interests and musings. They may appear to have no coherence or even relevance at the time. This may not be created with a focus or even an intention to create an account. The researcher may begin by telling, often apparently disconnected, stories of what is important to them, and a brief autobiographical story to help them begin to clarify their values and beliefs, and recognise their embodied and acquired knowledge. On one occasion, you may be reading, and find work that excites you and create notes for yourself while working on an action-reflection cycle dictated by circumstances or interest. On another occasion, you may get an idea of something you might do, but do not follow through in action. On another occasion you may see where you are living a contradiction, what you need to do differently, imagine possibilities, act accordingly, evaluate and so on. As you move through life and create breadcrumb trails in the form of narratives, notes, images and videos, you have data scattered round to draw on as you work on the systematic phase of your research.

The question to be addressed through the research, the data to collect, and the form of the process, are often not known at the beginning, and may only emerge as the enquiry proceeds. Sometimes this is a case of recognising that the enquiry has been going on for years, and the researcher may have unrecognised data scattered about them as Barry Hymer (2007) found when working on his doctoral thesis.

We see what we look for through our continually developing lenses honed by our responses and interactions with the complex ecology of our lives. Neugarten (2003) in his paper on 'seeing' and 'noticing' points to a creative and dynamic process:

'... it is not so much our eyes that see, but rather our brains. Far from 'seeing is believing', what we believe can seriously affect what we see. We shall show that 'there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball', and that looking too hard, getting too close, and being too focused is often counterproductive...' (p.93)

So, we get what we look for. Similarly the way in which I create imaginings of my reality forms that reality and questions can only be formed with a thought for their answers. However the process is subtle in its complexity. In trying to describe a Living Theory TASC research process

I therefore need to use a variety of devices to enhance our communication and share understanding. These devices include words as text in various forms, poetic, narrative, metaphors, photographs, pictures, drawings, video, using different voices and so on. I recognise that the devices of representation themselves are an integral part of the research method and may influence what is researched and the knowledge created. For now I wish to remain focused on a Living Theory TASC process.

In communicating to and with my self and others, to make sense of the organic flow of the adventure and journeys I have been on, I begin to understand what I have been doing. I begin to form an explanation emerging from as yet undescribed events. I am seeking to understand and theorise not only what has emerged of my physical and social world, but also to understand myself – the world within - and myself in and of the world. What values have I used to account for and explain my improving practice, what do I understand about myself as a learner, in relation to others, the passions I can now recognise I had, and may want to pursue, which will drive the systematic phase of the research?

I recognise that a common key to Living Theory TASC lies in the sections, 'communicate' to and with others, and 'what have I learnt'. Whitehead points to the same place in the process when he says that it is often the last thing that is written which is the point that needs to be brought to the front. You may not know, or recognise the significance of what you have done, until you have done it. The act of reappraising is not just a cognitive activity: reappraisal to enhance my educational influence involves heart and body as well as head. It is an act of extending self a loving recognition, developing respectful connectedness within self and expressing an educational responsibility towards others and for self.

As I reflect on what I have learned through my enquiry. I do so with a growing awareness of being respectful of my own boundaries, those between me and other worlds, and those within me, and the co-creative possibilities of acting within those boundaries while not violating them. A loving recognition is appreciative and respectful of those boundaries while offering opportunities within them for creating knowledge of self, and self in and of the world. This holds generative, transformational and life- enhancing possibilities for the worlds that form the boundaries.

As I have said, I think I go through two phases in researching and I can see others doing something similar. I understand research to be about trying to make sense of my worlds in a way that is generative and transformational for me and contributes generative and transformational possibilities for others. I have briefly reflected on the organic phase. As I consider the systematic phase bear in mind that I have written that the form of Living Theory TASC is relationally-dynamic and multidimensional, within phases and between phases. In the systematic phase, the work does not go clockwise round the 'wheel', even when creating an account. This paper is an example of what I mean. For instance, in the process of trying to produce an account that might communicate to you, I have organised, generated and reorganised material and reorganised it again as new learning emerges. Such an approach is also to be found in other disciplines, as illustrated by this reflection:



'I used to be a designer/engineer – you can't do that if you don't work iteratively. We also try and develop some of our IT systems in what we call a spiral fashion, tweaking and improving as we go along. Look at how Google rolls out new improvements, versus how Microsoft issues updates. I know which I prefer – iteratively.' (personal communication from Michael Neugarten, 12 November 2011)

Research is often thought by educators to start with 'exploration', laying out what is already known, or as TASC would have it, 'gather and organise'. I would like to take Whitehead's ideas of values and embodied living- educational-theory being revealed through researching to improve practice, and suggest a starting place of 'learning from experience'. As I reflect over what has been, I ask myself questions such as:

- What have I learnt about my values, myself, my passions? What skills and understandings have I extended?
- What talents have I developed and which do I need to develop? How does what I have learnt connect with other ideas?
- What knowledge have I created that I value?
- How have I affected others?
- How have I contributed to and benefited from my own learning and the learning of others?
- What are my embodied educational theories and beliefs?
- What do I want to explore now?

To move on, having considered 'communicating to and with others', and 'what I have learned', the understandings are carried up into the heart of the enquiry where the questions concerning what is of importance, and why, begin to emerge as the researcher connects with the anticipated audience of the account. The why is an important question to pose and comes directly from the Living Theory research process. I have seen the affect that posing that question has had on students beginning to enquire into what is important to them. It deepened their understanding not only of the discipline related enquiry but their understanding of themselves and how they want to be in the world. The affect on the research of teachers has similarly been deepened as can be seen in the Masters assignments on <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

I like the way TASC specifically identifies 'gather and organise knowledge' particularly relevant to the account. This reminds me explicitly of the i~we relationship, and the value of gifts of knowledge offered by self and others, and the new knowledge generated in the process of organising what is known. The number of rewrites of this paper offers an example of what I mean here.

The next sections of the Living Theory TASC are well explored and documented in work on TASC and Living Theory approaches to Action Research: what is the question/ what do I want to improve; imagining possibilities and selecting one; implementing and evaluating.

The difference I want to stress with understanding a Living Theory TASC method of researching is the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra- connections between the organic and systematic phases. The circle at the top of the drawing shown below (Figure 10) represents the systematic phase with interconnections and with the organic phase represented beneath and living-boundary between them.



Figure 10 Organic and systematic phases of research and the living-boundary between them

Before leaving this section I want to stress that creating a living-theory account is an educational process for the creator as well as those they work with, such as their colleagues or students, and who contribute to a validation group. In making accounts public a researcher can enhance his or her educational influence in their own learning, that of others and social formations in a co-operative, co-creative process.

In extending TASC to integrate the insights of Living Theory research more time and support is given to the learner to enable them to deepen their understanding of themselves through communicating to and with others what they have learned. This is through their enquiry about themselves and themselves in and of the world. It relates to knowledge of the social and cultural

influences on them of the context within which they live, and knowledge and of their ontological and social values, the talents they have and want to develop, their motivations, the nature of the world they want to bring into being through how they are, what gifts they want to create and offer to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others.

Unlike other forms of enquiry variously named collaborative, cooperative or participatory, the individual 'i' is not subsumed within, or subordinated to, the collective 'we'. Each person retains their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others; recognises, values and works to improve inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian learning and extend the educational influence of their ontological and relational 'i'. This is demonstrated by the work of Hymer (2007), which shows that even young children can demonstrate they are capable of:

- Valuing themselves as an expert able to develop their expertise in their own learning
- Developing and enhancing talents
- Creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, themselves and themselves in and of the world as a gift, to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others
- Coming to know and give living expression to the values that give their life meaning and purpose and create their own living- theory.

The work of Joy Mounter with 7-year-olds and Sally Cartwright with 17- year-olds shows that children and young people are capable of developing their own living-theory praxis given time, encouragement and support. You can see evidence to support this claim in Joy's writings (Mounter, 2007, 2012) and Sally's (Cartwright, Masters units (Cartwright, 2008), and the video of the presentation Sally's students made to senior educators and managers with responsibility for implementing the national 14-19 strategy in the local authority which can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK1uLrb7aAs&list=PL68BFC36A0791E85F> (Huxtable, 2009)

### **Educational knowledge as a contribution to the evolution of an educational epistemology**

'Everyone has an aptitude for something. The trick is to recognize it, to honor it, to work with it.' Shekerjian (1991)

The question I was continually posing as an EP was – who should be doing the recognising, honouring and working with? Often it is taken by teachers that it is them – my contention was, and is, that it is my task as an educator to enable students to recognise, honour and work with whatever it is that will enable them to learn what is for them to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life. I can determine what it is might be recognised as productive and worthwhile and even what expressions of a loving life might look like but it is only the individual themselves that can realise what it is that is that they can do that they will find satisfying as an expression of their unique contribution that they value. Maybe that is what my mother meant when she said, 'if you want to be a clown, be a clown, but be a good one.' Maybe that is what I

mean by my educational responsibility towards the other to enable them to realise their best intent, both realise as in recognise and value, and realise as in give living expression to it.

Going back to where I began: I liked Renzulli's (Renzulli and Reis, 1997) notion of 3 types of learning opportunities, and used it to focus my activities developing inclusive gifted education. The Saturday workshops were developed as a response to the lack of opportunities for experimentation and playfulness with ideas and personas as an expert, the opportunities for learning with planned outcomes was exemplified by the given curriculum and courses. What became blatantly obvious was the lack of learning opportunities for children and adults to behave as experts, enquiring into a question of importance or interest to them within a timeframe, with a valued outcome and in a disciplined manner. When I came across TASC I began to understand what enquiring as an expert in a 'disciplined manner' looked like. I liked the neatness of it but like Joy's pupils I didn't think that it quite communicated the complexity of the process of creating knowledge.

I couldn't see how the children and young people could learn to have an educational influence in their own learning, let alone the learning of anyone else, unless they were able to experience educational education so my first efforts were directed to getting teachers to work with Jack to experience for themselves what educational education was and learning to create their own living-theories. I then created opportunities for children, young people and adults to work together to begin their Living Theory research. This wasn't good enough though as they were instructor dependent. I realised that they could learn to do this with Jack's support but not without it. Simply helping them to create their own living-theories wasn't always helping them to become emancipated in their own learning and lives. It came as a shock to me when I realised that some people had even managed to create a living-theory doctorate but still hadn't got on the inside of Living Theory research. In that sense they had not become emancipated in their own learning and lives.

I realised early on that I didn't understand the process of creating a living-theory enough to be able to do it myself let alone support others but I needed to if I was to express my educational responsibility for myself and to develop inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian learning. So, as I developed opportunities and support for educators to engage in Living Theory research I 'walked the talk' and at the same time tried to create an understanding of the process I went through and could see others going through.

My introduction to Living Theory research was by way of Jack's action reflection cycle. This was easy for me. It was a common problem solving approach and something I had worked with in detail when I had developed something similar myself when developing a model for clarifying concerns and intervention when working on a psychology service referral system (Levey and Mallon, 1984):

- List concerns - select one
- Imagined outcome that represented progress within a given time frame – clarify outcome as teaching goal and target objective (evidence of success)

- Identify starting points and other preliminary considerations
- Develop an outline of weekly steps to bridge the gap between where you are and where you want to be
- Implement and record progress
- Review
- Revise
- Reconsider

Similar to what later was developed as solution focussed therapy, motivational interviewing and similar techniques that emerged in the field of applied psychology.

I was familiar with TASC, which again is a systematic form of enquiry but very elegantly put so that children and teachers can understand the enquiry process they were engaged in.

Action Research was becoming the popular thing but what I had read of it did not take me any further than traditional problem solving approaches. Living Theory research by contrast went beneath the surface to the heart of educational practice by recognising the educator was not an unwanted contaminant but it was understanding their motivations and values that were key to understanding and improving educational theory, practice and provision. Living Theory also had a form and logic I could recognise in researching my practice to improve it and the values-based explanations and standards of judgement enabled me to hold myself to account. However, I could not find accounts of Living Theory research that enabled me to understand the process for myself.

People just don't think and act in straight rational lines. Real human beings are a complicated and inconsistent mix of their own head, heart, body and life and that of others. A synthesis of Living Theory and TASC seemed to me to clarify the process much more clearly. I also thought that, like Joy's pupils, a wheel no more than a list represents the process. Initially I came up with a knot as I describe above.

At the Masters group and other research groups focussed by a Living Theory pedagogy I saw week-by-week people being encouraged to create autobiographical accounts and share the multimedia narratives, reports, summaries of what they had read, video clips of what was energising them... and much more of the knowledge they had and were creating as interest and external demands dictated. This process, while disciplined, seemed to be far more creative, innovative and educational than described in papers and books on Living Theory research I had read.

It was as researchers wanted (or needed) to create an account for their employer, or to submit for accreditation for a university degree, or a journal or conference that that I could see that Living Theory research comprised an organic and systematic phase connected in a multidimensional relational dynamic. I have tried to communicate this by presenting Living Theory TASC as a metaphor and heuristic. It is also my research methodology as it enables me to decide and justify what methods to use in the process of my research, for instance Action

Research might be particularly useful in staying focussed in 'do it', De Bono's (1987) 6 Thinking Hats' can help a Living Theory researcher develop their 'imagined possibilities' before 'deciding', Ethnography, Autoethnography and Multimedia Narratives might have a particular use in 'communicating to and with others' and Mindfulness literature might help to deepen thinking and reflections on 'what have I learned' and so on. This is just by way of illustration and not to imply that there is a fixed place for using various research methods or integrating particular insights from the literature or experience of others.

### **A few concluding thoughts**

So, to conclude, the nature of the knowledge and epistemological contribution I have offered can be understood as educational: my unit of appraisal is my explanation of my educational influence in learning in the account of Living Theory TASC; my life-affirming and life-enhancing values form my explanatory principles and living standards of judgement and; what distinguishes the rationality of my explanation is a living-logic which integrates insights from theories structured with both propositional and dialectical logics.

I have wanted to improve support for educational research for developing professional practice so that individuals might generate and offer their own living-theories as gifts of educational knowledge that contributes to the flourishing of humanity. What I have learned in the process of creating this paper is to conceptualise Living Theory TASC as a metaphor and heuristic rather than just a research method. This has enabled me to reveal and extend my understanding of the disciplined, multidimensional and relationally dynamic structures of Living Theory research in a comprehensible but not formulaic manner.

By making this account of Living Theory TASC public I hope to promote inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian learning and the generation of knowledge through which each individual's presence and contribution to the flourishing of humanity is recognised and affirmed.

This account has been created with an educational intention of communicating what I have learned as an educational practitioner seeking to express my educational responsibility by holding myself to account for improving my practice, and my professional responsibility to contribute to knowledge bases of educational theory, practice and provision and the creation of an educational epistemology. It is now for you as reader to say whether:

- My account been comprehensible;
- I have provided sufficient evidence to justify the assertions (claims to know something) that I make;
- I have provided you with sufficient understanding of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my activities and writings;
- I have shown that over time and interaction I am truly committed to living my ontological and relational values as fully as I can;
- I have offered a well-reasoned and reasonable explanation of why I do what I do;

- Your imagination been stimulated and those thoughts might contribute something to your educational journey as you seek to improve your educational contexts and relationships and contribute to the evolution of an educational knowledge base and epistemology.

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