

Changing Lives through Action Research and Living Educational Theory Research in Culture of Inquiry

Jacqueline Delong. International Mentor

Introduction

This paper is part of this symposium of five international practitioner-researchers who share their research: Jack Whitehead, UK, Tara Ratnam, India, Parbati Dhungana, Nepal, Michelle Vaughan, USA, Jacqueline Delong, Canada.



CARN Symposium Culture of Inquiry: clockwise: Jackie, Jack, Michelle, Parbati, Tara

Our symposium proposal:

We share our learning as a Culture of Inquiry where we co-create knowledge and as individuals in our contexts. The following conference sub-themes will be addressed: Community action and activism; Knowledge ecologies and knowledge democratisation; Improving practice in the face of adversity & pandemics; Including diverse voices and perspectives; Social Justice and equity; Educational and educative change; Methodological rigour and innovation. Evidence will be shared to justify the claim that Action Research and Living Educational Theory Research are changing lives with values of human flourishing within living Culture of Inquiry. “What is the more general value of this initiative? Our work gets its validity from how the meaning we produce resonates with others working in other contexts with similar concerns-- contributing to the larger dialogue on educational issues of equity, change, knowledge co-construction and conducting research” We also explain the relationship between Action Research and Living Educational Theory.

My contribution (Jacqueline Delong, International Mentor, Canada) is two-fold: One is my action research on my improving my practice and living my values more fully as a mentor to practitioner-researchers who are creating their own living-educational-theories. In the past few years (Delong et al, 2021, 2022), I have become more aware of the inequities in educational research and my research is a Living Educational Theory research process to increase my understanding of Eastern Wisdom Traditions, its languages, concepts and images and be more vigilant about the impositional, colonizing nature of the Western Critical Traditions and the English language as I mentor practitioner-researchers to create their living-educational-theories in Cultures of Inquiry. I work to find ways to mitigate “epistemicide” (Santos,

2014) in other ways of knowing and continue to research my practice for its improvement and mentor others to do the same.

Two is to research the processes of our Culture of Inquiry as I work to improve the ways in which it supports and encourages the members of our community as we co-create and co-learn.

The paper is framed with the following headings:

1. Purpose
2. Socio-historical-cultural context
3. Methods and Data Sources
4. Findings: A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry: a contribution to changing lives and human flourishing
5. Results
6. Significance
7. Looking ahead

Purpose

My purpose in this paper is to share the research that I have conducted over several decades on my practice as I have encouraged and supported practitioners, mostly teachers but also other professionals, to create their own living-educational-theories as a means to improve their lives and their practice. While I have reflected and written on the topic for many years, I feel an educational responsibility to explicitly define an approach of a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry to improving our practice and our world. I use the word 'approach' as opposed to a 'model' deliberately because I do not wish to frame it as inflexible or closed. Living Educational Theory Research, and Cultures of Inquiry have evolved over the years and will continue to be refined by those practitioners conducting the research as, "a way of living/life" (Griffin & Delong, 2021, p. 1). In fact, I invite you to modify the approach to meet your own needs.

Socio-Historical-Cultural Context

As a superintendent of education for 13 years, I introduced the Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development, building it from a small group of seven teachers and school administrators to a critical mass of teacher- researchers across the system (DeLong, 2002). We created eight volumes of "Passion in Professional Practice" (DeLong *et al.*, 2001–2008), which was the repository of the classroom research. I invited teachers to create their own living-educational-theories and to personalize their own learning as professional development (DeLong, 2022), not through my or anyone else's agenda.



Figure 3: Summary of the approach of Living Educational Theory in Culture of Inquiry for Professional Development (DeLong, 2022a).

This model of professional growth links research and practice and leads to substantive change where we, "both explore and theorise practice" (McAteer, 2013, p. 13). Bev McDonald, one of the early adopters in the Brant Country Board of Education, wrote that she had 'grown as a professional', and that:

I have had the opportunity to reflect and review Literacy in the Primary Grades and to implement a very exciting literacy program in my classroom. Throughout the whole process, I have felt in complete control of all aspects, along with my two colleagues. (Halsall & Hossack, 1996, p. 24)

As a university adjunct professor, I organized and taught this process for accreditation at Master's level for cohorts of educators in several school districts (DeLong, 2002). Subsequent to that, I was a consultant with another school district to support the implementation of a Living Educational Theory Research approach as professional development (Griffin, 2011; Campbell, 2011, 2019). For the past five years, I have mentored graduate and postgraduate practitioner-researchers around the world to create their own living-educational-theories in global Cultures of Inquiry, and to publish their results.

As I was writing up at the time of the death of Queen Elizabeth II and during the time of mourning and her funeral, I found myself reflecting on the amazing contribution of this woman of such grace and strength to our world for over 70 years, my lifetime. She lived her life consistently according to her priorities: service, duty, faith, family. Reflecting on her life well-lived, her service to the flourishing of humanity brings to mind how my own contributions might be viewed. In fact, I was writing some of this introduction during the actual funeral. (It needs to be said that while I feel that I am a spiritual humanist, I feel inspired by the values and precepts of the Christian religion.) I wrote of the influence of “servant leadership” (DeLong, 2002; Sergionvanni, 1992; Greenleaf, 1997) and my intention to live according to “True North principles” (Covey, 1990) and ‘to seek first to understand before being understood’ (Covey, 1990; DeLong, 2002).

My overriding priority in mentoring Living Educational Research was and continues to be encouraging and supporting practitioner researchers to come to know their values, to learn to live them more fully, and to create their own Living Educational Theory.

In the paper I share this sustained global Culture of Inquiry that began in 2020 as a means to co-research and co-present our research and has evolved for those purposes at AERA 2021, 2022 and CARN 2022. While members of the group join the culture and sometimes leave, others are constants.

Methods and Data Sources

I begin with two significant processes endemic to my research. The first is a Culture of Inquiry (DeLong, 2002, 2013, 2022) which is the process and pedagogy that I create in order to support others to create their own living-educational-theories. The second is the methodology of Living Educational Theory and how it relates to Action Research. First, A Culture of Inquiry.

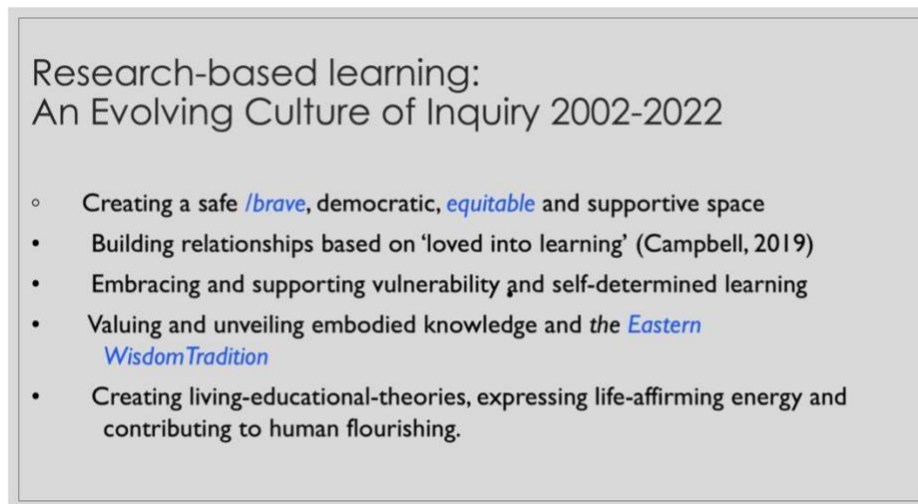


Figure 1. Evolving nature of a Culture of Inquiry (DeLong, 2022).

In my thesis (DeLong, 2002), I unveiled what I thought was a prerequisite space, a Culture of Inquiry, for educators to influence themselves, others and social formations. This Culture of Inquiry space is an environment, a '*practice architecture*' (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014) for giving voice to

practitioners. I frequently exhort them not to allow others to speak for them, to represent their embodied knowledge for and by themselves. I invite them into a Culture of Inquiry, a culture of love and support and encouragement, to unveil their embodied knowledge and create their own living-educational-theories.

This Culture of Inquiry includes: Said's (1993, p. xiv) idea that culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought; Maxwell's (2021, p. 51) distinction between knowledge-inquiry and wisdom-inquiry in creating 'rational problem solving' in '*cooperatively rational ways*'; de Santos' (2014) analysis of epistemicide in relation to establishing equitable education systems and Bhattacharya's (2021) ideas on colonizing academic practices and McNiff and Whitehead 's (1996) and Wood et al.'s (2007) self-study action research processes.

In contributing to enhancing the global educational influence of a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development, it is essential to recognise, respect and, where necessary, to challenge or question cultural differences. Without this recognition, respect or questioning, it is likely that an individual practitioner from one culture might be in danger of behaving in a colonizing way in another. This is a particular danger in which practitioner-researchers like myself have been culturally influenced by Western Academic Traditions. I have found it necessary to question these traditions as I have engaged with Eastern epistemologies and insights from Africa on Ubuntu, and Hawaii on Aloha, and insights from indigenous forms of knowledge. I feel very connected to the work of Suresh Nanwani (2022a; 2022b):

Human Connections is about the author's integrative journey of teaching experiences in China and beyond, focusing on two central questions: *What matters most?* and *How to improve?* The author's narrative to answering these questions is expressed in dynamic values acquired through learning and teaching episodes. Organization Development (OD) theories from a western outlook including Appreciative Inquiry and Living, along with ikigai, yoga, meditation, and tai chi from an eastern perspective, are examined holistically to provide insights into meaningful relationships between teacher and students. (Nanwani, 2022b, p. 12)

My mentees, my colleagues and I are using a Living Educational Theory Research methodology drawing insights from Action Research and action-reflection cycles:

Living Educational Theory

- ▶ *realisation in practice of humanitarian and life-enhancing values, which contribute to a world in which humanity can increasingly flourish.*
- ▶ *practitioner-researcher's valid, values-based 'explanation for their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations',*
- ▶ *created in the process of researching questions such as, 'How do I improve what I am doing'.*
- ▶ *places "I" at the centre of the research*
- ▶ *includes action-reflection cycles*

Whitehead, 1989

4/10/22

We draw insights from various methodologies such as action research, narrative and self-study and focus on the processes of Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1989) while creating my own living-educational-theory methodology. Action research is a collaborative process that can empower and build a sense of community among professionals, with the purpose of taking action to make a change (Mason et al., 2017; Rowell, 2006 p.1)

Reason and Torbert (2001) make the connection between action research, reflection, and human flourishing:

since all human persons are participating actors in their world, the purpose of action research is not simply or even primarily to contribute to the fund of knowledge in a field, to deconstruct taken-for-granted realities, or even to develop emancipatory theory, but rather to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to moment personal and social action, so that inquiry contributes *directly* to the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the ecosystems of which they are part (p. 5).

It seems appropriate as well to show the relationship between Action Research and Living Educational Theory. In our CARN group conversation on Monday September 19 on the connection, our dialogue was:



Video 1: CARN 2022 Planning 19-09-22

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS0OUbR99LM>

Jack (20:21): Action research ...is a really valuable process of inquiry of how do people improve their practice. Now the difference [between Living Educational Theory and Action Research], I think, is this that there is a necessary condition of Living Educational Theory that the practitioner researcher has got to generate and share an explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, of others and the learning of the social formation.

Now that is not a necessity within action research to do that. The action research has got the action reflection cycle which is often very valuable but the Living Educational Theory has got as a necessary condition that we actually generate and share these explanations of our educational influence so that's how I actually think about the distinction. I always use the actual reflection cycles but there's no necessity within action research to go on and generate and share an evidence and values-based explanation of educational influence in learning.

Jackie: Yes. I think for me that action research is a tool.

Tara (22: 57): Oh my god! You took the words off my mouth I was just going to say, have written down the point...Action research provides the tool for a personal inquiry; this action reflection cycle is something that we cannot do away with. I mean we think and then we act and think and act and the dialect between the two.

Jack: it's just around this that you must remember that in 1982 there was that publication that came out of Stephen Kemmis about what was called becoming critical, knowing through action research and what they did was not just use the actual reflection cycle they actually put over that Habermas' critical theory so they integrated within what they were claiming about action research a critical theory approach. And I just mentioned that because that is something that if you like we might draw that on that but we use the actual reflection cycles you know without that imposition of the Habermas' Critical Theory even though I draw insights from that.

In fact, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of my actions and explanations for my educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations I share my research in a validation group of 3-8 peers using Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity:

- i) How could I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- ii) How could I strengthen the evidence I use in my explanation of educational influence in learning?
- iii) How could I deepen and extend my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my practice and understandings?
- iv) How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in showing that I am living my values as fully as possible.

I intend to test the validity of my claims made in the presentation and ask participants in the symposium to join me in this purpose.

As an example, in response to my initial writing up of this research, Michelle said:



Video 1: CARN 2022 planning 12-09-22
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWOqotl9Hek>

Michelle: (0:12). Yes. I thought that the intersection between the personal and the professional growth was really depicted well and really seamless because I think that that change happens from the inside out which we talk about all the time. So being able to see how different relationships and your personal experiences with your health and all those things kind of come Together. And that impacts how you show up in a world and how you interact with others. It's validating, I think.

The methods I use include the use of dialogue as research method (DeLong, 2020) and digital visual data with visual narratives to develop a shared understanding of the relational values inherent in creating equitable school systems and learning, enhancing equity and creating Cultures of Inquiry, safe, democratic spaces for human flourishing. I find that multimedia narratives with digital video are essential for clarifying and communicating meanings of embodied expressions of ontological values such

as love. Support is a critical component in learning and growth, and includes opportunities to have dialogue, Cultures of Inquiry, critical friends, and guidance from mentors (DeLong, 2021):

Engaging in dialogue also calls for participants to develop a sense of mutual respect towards one another and developing an awareness of one's own and one another's fragility is paramount. (Glenn, 2021, p. 20)

The modes Cultures of Inquiry draw insights from: auto-ethnography stressing the importance of cultural influences, particularly, Eastern; action research with action-reflection cycles; narrative in constructing a valid, evidence-based story; self-study including 'I' within the research question. I find action research works in its democratic capacity as Wood et al. (2007) state:

Action research abolishes the traditional power relationships between researcher and those being researched and replaces them with a more equal partnership where both parties challenge and support each other in a mutual quest to improve their work (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005:22). It allows educators to be "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988:1), who critique their own practice and try to create theories which are more in tune with accepted transformative values (p. 72).

In this paper, I draw on my own research and publications on my own practice over 25 years on an approach of Living Education Theory in Cultures of Inquiry to professional development – some of which are referenced in this paper – and those of other practitioners with whom I have collaborated (for example, Griffin & DeLong, 2021; Vaughan & DeLong, 2019, Whitehead & DeLong, 2011). In particular, I bring examples from our AERA 2021 and 2022 communities (DeLong, *et al.*, 2021; 2022) in which we have researched our practice as individuals and as a Culture of Inquiry. I have implemented and researched this approach to Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry in terms of improving self and practice in many different contexts, and I am consistently asking how I might improve my support for practitioners creating their own living-educational-theories.

In all of the papers and presentations referenced in this paper, the methods I use include:

- empathetic resonance (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2010; DeLong, 2010)
- dialogue as method (DeLong, 2020) and digital visual data to clarify the meanings of the energy-flowing values of democracy, vulnerability and loved into learning (DeLong, *et al.*, 2021; Campbell, 2011);
- validation groups to enhance the comprehensibility, evidence, normative understandings and authenticity (Habermas, 1976) of the claims to educational knowledge.
- action-reflection cycles to improve our practice and the co-creation of educational knowledge.

While I have shared these methods in other publications, at this point I will give an example of what I mean by *empathetic resonance*:



Video 3. Empathetic Resonance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z00ZE1C74II>

(DeLong, 2019)

In the video clip, Michelle Vaughan says that she imagines me, "like a fairy godmother with all these lives that you are touching". Here is my reaction! If you put your cursor on the red line of the clip and just move it back and forth, I think you can see the life-affirming energy in both of us in the process called, 'empathetic resonance (DeLong *et al.*, 2013, p. 79). Herein is the value in using technology and digital data in educational conversations as a research method, in order to share our meanings that text alone cannot convey. (DeLong, 2020, p. 10)

Insights are drawn from *Living Educational Theory Research* (Whitehead, 2019) and *Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry* (DeLong, 2002; 2021) to explain how our community of practice fulfils our educational responsibility to improve our educational practices, change lives and to contribute to the global knowledgebase of education. I draw on the research of our AERA 2021 community members (Dhungana, 2020; Vaughan, 2019; Mishra, 2021; Whitehead, 2019) and our AERA 2022 Culture of Inquiry ((Dhungana, 2022; Vaughan, 2022; Rawal, 2022; Whitehead, 2022) as they contribute their data from their sites of practice, from digital visual data and from field-based Participatory Action Research projects to provide evidence of the creation of educational knowledge and the changing of lives associated with a community of Living Educational Theory researchers.

My international mentoring contributes to the Living Educational Theory social movement and focuses on informal research and on Master's and Doctoral theses. This also fulfils my educational responsibilities as a global citizen (Potts, Coombs & Whitehead, 2013), and citizen scholar (Vaughan & DeLong, 2019; Harper *et al.*, 2021) as I work with others in international education. The data sources include over 50 Living Educational Theory masters and doctoral theses (accessed from <https://actionresearch.net/>) that have been awarded at Universities around the world, eight volumes of *Passion in Professional Practice* (DeLong, *et al.*, 2001– 2007) and 11 years of publications in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs). I refer you to the freely available issues of EJOLTs, where you will find living-educational- theories from around the globe.

Next, I focus on my findings in our global Culture of Inquiry including findings from our symposia to AERA 2021 and 2022 as examples of Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry.

Findings: A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry: a contribution to changing lives and human flourishing

I have been and continue to be so fortunate to work with practitioner-researchers who help me to improve my practice and living according to my values. Over the years, there have been many but, in this paper, I will focus on my mentoring with Michelle, Liz, Cathy, Femke and Parbati. Each of them has provided me with opportunities to learn and contribute. It goes without saying that Jack has been my biggest influence over 27 years from the day in 1995 that we met in Toronto at an action research conference and I started my doctoral studies with him at Bath University, UK. to the postdoctoral research we continue today.

By applying my values as explanatory principles and creating my own living-educational-theory, I share my findings with posing and answering the questions:

1. What is the nature of my influence on myself? Am I living my values as fully as possible?
2. What is the nature of my influence on others?
3. What is the nature of my influence on the social formations?

If I am to use my values as explanatory principles to answer this question, I need to share what I know to be my values based on the evidence that I have gathered. When I trace my expressed values over some 30 years of examining them through Living Educational Theory Research, the words may be slightly different but in my dialogical way of being the core of them remains the same:

1. building educational relationships,
2. loving them into learning,
3. creating a Culture of Inquiry to support Living Theory researchers.

I identify with Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt's point about building on love and working through local and global action to connect us with each other as human beings and with nature:

... I have argued that we need to shift away from the mindset of neoliberalism and reductionism dominating our present society and driving its obsession with consumerism, power and control. Instead we need a collaborative, participative and inclusive paradigm built on love and working through local and global action to connect us with each other as human beings and with nature. Society needs to be renewed by making a shift from the negative energy of fear, competition, control and war to the positive energy of faith, love, hope and creativity. Clearly, we need to conceptualize and practice not just learning conferences but Loving Learning Conferences. (Zuber-Skerritt, 2017, p. 224)

1. What is the nature of my influence on myself? Am I living my values as fully as possible?

Through my writing and publishing, I have clarified my ways of being, my ontological values. In particular, my values of building relationships and loving them into learning. Building relationships has been a constant since the writing of my thesis (2002) and it was Liz Campbell (2011) who coined my value as she described my way of teaching her and the rest of the Master's cohort group as being "loved into learning". Michelle Vaughan (Vaughan & DeLong, 2019) also described it as "leaving my ego at the door":

“It's something about not bringing your ego into it which I think allows the love to flow through.”
(Delong, 2019, p. 15)

Continuing on this topic of love, Skolimowski (1994) lists some of the main characteristics of a participatory research program and points to love as the deepest form of participation:

Love is the deepest form of participation.
Where there is love there is participation.
Loveless participation is an anaemic involvement.
To participate is the first step to loving. (p. 159)

The inclusion of love within a research program may be too much for minds trained in the rigors of objectivity but I am certain of the importance of love in loving what I do. Lohr's (2006) doctoral thesis on “Love at Work” uses love as an explanatory principle and living standard of judgment. I also identify with the way Cho (2005) focuses on the work of Freire (1998, p.22) where love in an educational relationship enables both student and teacher to preserve the distinctiveness of their positions by turning away from one another and toward the world in order to produce knowledge through inquiry and thought:

...love means the pursuit of real knowledge, knowledge that is no longer limited to particular content passed from one to the other, but rather knowledge that can only be attained by each partner seeking it in the world. To put this differently, knowledge is by definition the inquiry we make into the world, which is a pursuit inaugurated by a loving encounter with a teacher. With love, education becomes an open space for thought from which emerges knowledge. (Cho, 2005, p. 95)

Each time I have the opportunity to work with others, I am also working to improve my practice and ask explicitly for help in ensuring that I am coaching at the side and not leading or pushing. It is the practitioner who has the practical knowledge, the “embodied knowledge” and I work to help them recognize that “personal knowledge” (Polanyi, 1958) and share it on comfortable stages.

The evidence is in the sustained work I have done with mentees over many years and the cultures of inquiry that I have invested in so that practitioner-researchers were provided with the environment to research and share their embodied knowledge and create their living-educational-theories. The data is in the writings of Michelle, Femke, Parbati.

1. What is the nature of my influence on others? Am I living my values as fully as I can?

Evidence of my influence on others resides in the research of those individuals that I have mentored.

As Yamamoto (1998) describes, it is a matter of trust, recognition and affirmation:

“What is sought is not praise, reward, or pity, all of which are an accounting for past deeds. Rather, it is regard-an acknowledgment of one's personhood as well as trust in what is and is to come-that is desired...If that is the case, the recognition and affirmation by a mentor may be expected to have a profound influence on the chosen few.” (p. 184)

Let me give a few examples that provide evidence that I am having a positive influence on others and “changing lives”.

Michelle Vaughan

This narrative starts with the workshop that Jack Whitehead, Marie Huxtable and I presented at the 10th ALARA World Congress in Vermont, USA in June 2018. As I share this story I am aware of what Richardson (1997) cautions:

“The story of a life is less than the actual life, because the story told is selective, partial, contextually constructed and because the life is not yet over. But the story of a life is also more than the life, the contours and meaning allegorically extending to others, seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another’s life story, revisioning their own, arriving where they started and knowing ‘the place for the first time’ (T S Eliot Four Quartets.)” (p. 6)

I am also conscious that “whenever I write a story, I not only produce a narrative but I’m reproducing myself. The very narrating acts upon me and I am changing.” (Aoki, 1994, p. 10) Here is an excerpt from the record of the Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA) proceedings (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwworkshopalara2018.pdf>):

A workshop at the 10th ALARA World Congress at Norwich University, Vermont, USA on the 19th June 2018 on ‘Where do we go from here in contributing to ‘The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?’ Jackie Delong Jack Whitehead Marie Huxtable



Figure 1. Jack and Jackie getting the workshop underway

1:33 hour video of the workshop at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swTrYSfeb0g>

It was in this workshop that Michelle first began her journey to creating her own living-educational-theory (Vaughan, 2019) with me as mentor.

In a Zoom conversation on February 17, available in full at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tchcfRFzC4M>, Michelle shared her excitement about her doctoral class where the students were sharing their values. The excitement in her face as she articulated these thoughts was infectious and, “you can see and hear energy flowing values which enhance the ability to

feel life affirming energy” (Campbell, 2011, p. 111). Michelle shares her experience with her students (0-1:41) and the importance of joy in the classroom:



Figure 2. Michelle talks about joy in the classroom
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rilWhoEFlas&t=796s>

Michelle: “At the end of it on Tuesday night it was if somebody did an analysis of what we talked about the last 2 weeks, the clear theme was, there was a clear theme of joy that was running through their framework. It was on half of their frameworks about the importance of having joy in a classroom and then there were 3 or 4 who had safety. So man, I thought, if somebody could come here and see their work, this group of budding scholars talking about joy and safety and love. One of my students, he (he as an early childhood background) created this whole framework like a solar system with love right in the centre. It was so cool.

I mean someone would feel so hopeful to hear this group of budding scholars talk about what is important to them. And I did this exact assignment last year at this time and that was not the outcome. I can’t help but think it’s because I’m in a different place. I am unconsciously but also consciously honouring talking about their values and what’s important and they’ve now bubbled up and they’ve found a place in an academic piece and it was very reaffirming because I felt like ‘they feel it, too’ like I created a space and they rose to the challenge. It’s exciting. It really is exciting.”

Not only is this evidence of my influence on Michelle and her influence on her students and curriculum, we can see our influence on the social formation of her university and its programs.

Parbati Dhungana

I have worked with Parbati since the CARN conference in Croatia where she attended one of my sessions and accepted my offer to support her in creating her own living-educational-theory. At the time she was writing up her Doctoral thesis and graduated in 2022 with her PhD. I am adding to the Eastern Traditions that Parbati has taught me for our AERA 2021 and 2022 papers.

Educational Journal of Living Theories 15(1), 43-66, <http://ejolts.net/drupal/node/387>

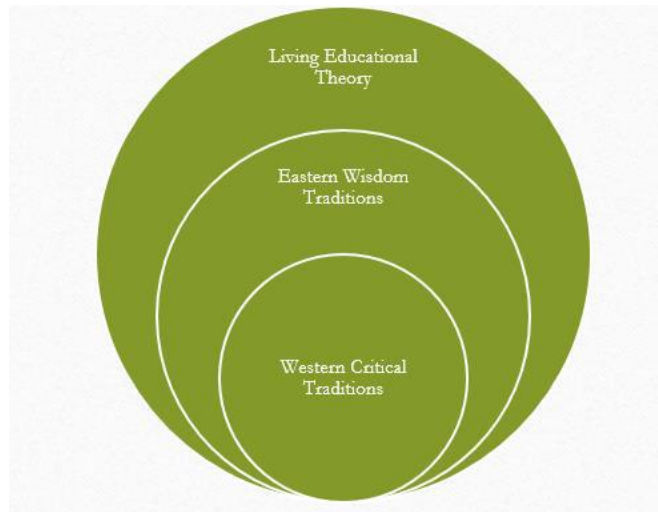


Figure 4: Living Educational Theory Cultures of Inquiry integrate Eastern Wisdom Traditions and Western Critical Traditions (Dhungana, 2022).

These include Ardhanarishwar (Urda/nari/swar) and (Sat/chit/Ananda) highest form of Harmony. From my 2021 research, I share some of my transformative learning:

Ardhanarishwar

- ▶ a Metaphor of a Harmonious Equitable space
- ▶ symbolizes male and female principles cannot be separated; unity of opposites
- ▶ harmonizes the two conflicting ways of life and our qualities of consciousness as logicity and intuitiveness. (Dhungana, 2022)

Footer

7

4/10/22

Figure ?: Ardhanarishwar

Having had a crisis in my life in May-June this year, colon cancer, and having survived the surgery with no additional treatment, I more than ever, try to “harmonize the two conflicting ways of life” and live in harmony. This image, I believe is evidence of Parvati’s influence on me!



In presenting her research (05/25/2022) with her colleagues, Parbati used this image based on her research paper (to focus on gender equity).

Results and discussion

How can we develop a gender-responsive curriculum?

The three context-responsive equitable strategies:

- adapting collaborative approach,
- promoting ‘the 3 pillars’, and
- enhancing inclusiveness.

Video 1: Context responsive equitable strategies for developing gender-responsive curriculum in Nepal:
 A poetic inquiry 05/25/2022
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot5NadYH3uQ>

Through poetic inquiry, she shared their results with a poem:

*I am the program designer and implementer
 a female teacher educator, sensitive in gender
 My course promotes enough reflective and critical thinking,
 include issues of gender equity with frequent revisiting.
 I am very conscious of using gender-neutral language,
 It would be challenging if I did not use the English language.*

*Books and reference materials; articles and literary pieces,
With my careful selection of not gender stereotyped texts.
I am aware of gender, gender roles, and authorship of women,
Dugas & Allard's article, Plath's poetry to name a few of them.
Teaching and learning by the individual, pair works, and group works
Through reading and writing, presentation, discussion and field works.
I instruct, I facilitate, and I teach what to teach, how to teach and why to teach,
Through the module, auto tutorials, CD, face-to-face, online, games, activity and research.
In-semester 50% and end-semester 50% , my assessment system,
I evaluate all the assignments and follow the letter grade system.
My teaching and assessment are not of learning but for learning.
I claim a gender-sensitive environment for conducive learning.
Finally, I would like to thank you all for listening,
Drop your queries as/for gender mainstreaming.*

Femke Bijker, Netherlands.

Femke and I met on October 25, 2020 at a virtual conference and worked together both on-line and in person when she visited us in Spain for 5 days. She wrote an article on her own living-educational-theory in her June 2022 EJOLTs article, "Intention and Reflection, Doing and Dialogue"

Which values?

October 2020 25th I met Jackie Delong at one of the virtual workshops of the Collaborative Action Research Network. She offered (in line with her values) to help me with articulating my own living-educational-theory. For me it started with thinking about this theory. I shared some of the research I had done, which was working with teachers and career counsellors and students at the basic level of vocational education in the Netherlands. In preparation for a digital contribution to the Living Knowledge Festival in June 2020, I started to ask my co-researchers (teachers and career-counsellors) how my professional actions were perceived. I admit that it felt uncomfortable to ask. Maybe this is a characteristic of people from the North of the Netherlands. A well-known saying is, 'do not make yourself look better than you are'. Of course, my upbringing has also influenced me into believing it is better to give than to take.

However, in the event, it was very pleasant to hear how my actions were perceived after working together for a period of about two years. So, this was my starting point. In this process, I found that I did not feel comfortable asking for this kind of feedback from people with whom I am in a power relationship, such as students whom I have yet to assess. And I think it works the other way around as well: If I am too dependent on someone, it does not feel comfortable. Then I do not feel the freedom to have this dialogue. However, since May 2020, I have been taking stock of my values and how I put them into practice. First, I will express the ontological values, the 'what' and the feedback I got. Secondly, I will articulate the relational values and express if and how they are perceived. (Bijker, 2022, p. 35) Educational Journal of Living Theories 15(1): 26-42, <http://ejolts.net/drupal/node/386>

In addition, I have taught several of her student-teacher classes the Living Educational Theory Research process by working with them on uncovering their values and looking for data that will help them live

them in their classrooms with their students. In the September 29, 2022 class, one of the students asked me to explain my work on dialogue as research method. I outlined the steps:

1. Get permission to record; Record the dialogue
2. Upload to YouTube on Private
3. Download the transcript (3 dots at bottom right of video)
4. Assign speakers to the transcript
5. Determine which parts are useful for data
6. Make clips of those parts
7. Get permission from participants to use in research
8. Mark clips on YouTube as Public
9. Insert into paper as evidence to support claims to know.

The feedback I received in an email from Femke was:

The good news is that you have a great influence on learning of our students ;-). For example, Patrick wrote from himself just this week -he is a student of semester 1- "By that I also mean challenging others to engage in dialogue with the class, something I really did take away from Jackie." (Delong, email, October 14, 2022).

2. How am I influencing social formations?

I see myself as part of a social movement of practitioner-researchers who are creating the future with hope. When we meet as a group, Jack, Parbati, Tara, Michelle, we are all influencing each other as part of that movement. I am emphasizing the nature of relationships in a relational dynamic with others with a relationally dynamic awareness of being together which retains the integrity of each other but at the same time recognizes the autonomous individual.

I think my main influence on social formations is through the Culture of Inquiry that I have created and nurtured, particularly the "sustained Culture of Inquiry" (Vaughan & Delong, 2019). In our article you can hear Michelle's influence on me and mine on her:

First, Jackie reviews evidence from working and learning with Michelle Vaughan and shares their first meeting, supporting Michelle to create her living-educational-theory, their co-learning, Michelle's continuing influence in her doctoral programs and an example of life-affirming energy through "empathetic resonance".

Since the ALARA Conference in Norwich, Vermont in 2018, Jackie has openly made herself available to mentor individuals wanting to create their own-living-educational theory. At that conference, between our meeting at a workshop that Jack and I presented and June of 2019, Michelle Vaughan and Jackie created a culture of inquiry in which Michelle created her own living-educational theory and had it published (Vaughan, 2019). Liz Campbell coined the phrase that describes Jackie's way of teaching as "being loved into learning" (Campbell, 2011). Others have expanded that language. Michelle's language to describe Jackie's way of being in creating the cultures of inquiry was, "leaving your ego at the door" (Vaughan & Delong, 2019):



Video 4. Loved into learning and leaving ego at the door

<https://youtu.be/wjm13drYVQc>

(DeLong, 2021c)

When I shared with Michelle the ‘loved into learning’ language, Michelle responded by describing my way of being that encouraged her research as “leaving my ego at the door”:

“It’s something about you not bringing your ego into it which I think allows the love to flow through. I think to be able to show genuine love and also having your ego: they don’t play well together in the sandbox. So, if you really want to have somebody feel that emotion, I think you approach a lot of these relationships without ego and that is, in my experience, rare in higher education... It feels like everybody needs two chairs; one for your body and one for your ego.” (p. 73)

Michelle goes on to say that the roles of mentor and mentee have been reciprocal in nature, offering both of them space to learn, grow and improve their practice,

“This article provided me with a framework and the language to capture the type of community I described in my conversation with her. As I move forward with my living-educational-theory work, my goal is to bring others with me in a culture of inquiry, defined beautifully as the ‘creation of a safe, supportive space where students and teachers are enabled to make explicit their values and make themselves accountable for living according to those values’ (DeLong, 2013, p. 26). I am hopeful that the paradox of mentorship that Yamamoto (1998) discusses has occurred, that in Jackie mentoring me to see beyond myself and become more fully the person I was meant to be, I am simultaneously helping to fulfill her own potential as I serve in my role as the mentee. By modeling for me how to support others in developing their ideas about living-educational-theory, I am now able to advocate for the role living-educational-theory *must* play in our development as practitioners and scholars.” (ibid, p. 78).

In conducting this research in cycles of action and reflection, I have found that the dialogue amongst the members of the symposium members stimulates and informs my thinking through the cycles. From the July 25th meeting, Tara Ratnam, who is a new member of our community as a result of her responding to our invitation as a member of our AERA 2022 audience, offered to help me with my learning and improvement:

Tara: Jackie, I was just thinking since (0:43) you're interested in exploring other Cultures and you're already doing it with part Parbati and if you can kind of put down your thinking and in which direction you're going then maybe I can come in and contribute. At least put down some points and say that from this perspective, this is how it looks and I can respond to it from the Indian perspective. I think that should help you to move further with your own thinking."

After that meeting, Tara sent some of her published work from which I pulled some ideas that resonated with me:

"Knowledge, in this view, is not something 'out there' that can be transmitted externally, but co-constructed by contributions from individuals participating in practice (Stetesenko, 2016) with social others and the tools afforded by their cultural historical milieu (Ratnam, 2021, p. 81).

A pedagogy of co-authorship is at best a means to heighten collective awareness of its emergence with the hope that this awareness will lead to the creation of compassionate spaces for ourselves through actively uniting to alter the status quo rather than letting entitlement become the default strategy to deflect change (ibid., p. 96).

As a child, I listened to stories about *rishis* in the Himalayas, who had matted locks and long beards, and who supposedly engaged in *tapas* (deep meditation) for eons to gain *Ātmajñāna* (self-realization). The idea of self-realization, which sounded very esoteric and remote from my reality at that time, started making sense years later as I engaged in this humbling process to combat excessive entitlement present in myself and others through *Ātmajñāna* and the attendant empathetic understanding of the other (Ratnam, Foreward).

Then on August 8th, when asked if she could talk about "Indian ways of knowing", she said that she found it too big a topic but then continued to explain the meaning and pronunciation of *Ātmajñāna*: self-knowledge; *'Athma-nyana*; *Sardah*: same heart, *SaHHHr-day*; *Gita*: one of 2 big epics concerning Lord Krishna, way of life; *Karma*: Your duty; *Dharma*: moral duty.

In this case, Tara is influencing me and changing my life as I come to increase my understanding of Eastern Ways of knowing and being.

From Tara's writing, I have drawn the following concepts:

Tara's learning in her research with Cheryl Craig that "excessive teacher entitlement" was an apparent symptom of not including teachers in the research process and downloading the results as a fait accompli without their involvement and she says:

"Edwards (2015, pp. 780–81) highlights the importance of attending to the dialectic of "person and practice" in studies of teachers' agency." (Ratnam, p. 80)

A pedagogy of co-authorship is at best a means to heighten collective awareness of its emergence with the hope that this awareness will lead to the creation of compassionate spaces for ourselves through actively uniting to alter the status quo rather than letting entitlement become the default strategy to deflect change. (ibid., p. 96)

From Michelle Vaughan, I am becoming aware of the negative changes occurring for her and her students in a country where I have come to expect progressive not regressive attitudes and policies. We tend to think of countries like Afghanistan as having repressive and repressive policies, not USA:

Michelle 7:50 I think you know when Jack was talking about the impact of policies and the context in Afghanistan, it really made me think about what is going on within our particular state with the current political climate and I know we've talked a little bit about this. Our teaching population is under siege right now with increased policies being passed that limit what they're able to say, what content they're able to teach: all of our books in our classrooms are being re-examined. And we've got more books than ever being removed from classrooms because of liberal ideas so it feels like we're going backwards in time. In my current context where I live so I think more than ever teachers are feeling scared and limited and they have less autonomy than they did two years ago. So, it is going to be an interesting year to work with teachers to (9:00) do the things that I feel like I've always done with them in the past seven-eight years to try to push them to you know take some of the power and learn the language of data so that they can be more of a force in their schools. That's almost dangerous now so it will be an interesting year when I think about the context in which they're teaching. Also, we have a huge teacher shortage so they're overworked in big classrooms. I mean it's a recipe for (9:31) disaster currently: we don't have enough teachers to fill classrooms because people didn't come back after the pandemic and who wants to work in this environment?

I am in also agreement with Michelle when she writes:

"I believe that the genuine caring and love we show our students has a greater impact on their educational experience than the content we deliver. In fact, I argue that connection within any learning context must precede content." And, "I would also like to continue to learn more about the definition of harmony through the lens of EWT and evolve my own language and understanding to integrate harmony as a goal of my practice." (Vaughan, CARN Initial Writing, 2022).

My claim to have influenced social formations can be supported in the publication of one of Femke's students and her recognition of my influence:

Very proud of former student and fellow educational professional [Levi Wolbers](#) who has made a major contribution to better education by investigating his own actions together with students, colleagues and experts. It is wonderful that Levi's process and beautiful product has been given a place in the [AOB](#). Researching one's own values in relation to good action is [#betekenisvolonderwijsonderzoek](#). From my role as teacher trainer also thanks to [Jackie Delong](#), [Jack Whitehead](#), [Gert Biesta](#), Martine Delfos and Geert Kelchtermans for inspiration for the thematic research group 'The teacher as subject' for teachers in training at [Windesheim](#). Also very proud of other former students and (former) colleagues who inspire each other to investigate and improve (own) actions in education! [Christel van der Veen](#) [Jeroen Bode](#) [Patrick](#)

[Hulshof Annemarie Hoogendijk Wouter Plas Margreet Van Oudheusden Marjon Weijs-Lijster Fatih Aktaş](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bijwaarde/). (October 8, 2022, LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bijwaarde/>)

Results

The results include evidence that the community of mentor and mentees' co-learning (Nyanjom, 2020) in Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry has influenced the creation of knowledge and the spreading educational influence of these global Cultures of Inquiry with practitioner-researchers. The results have emerged from the educational inquiries of researchers who have used technology, such as video-conferencing platforms like Skype, Teams and Zoom to their advantage, to live the values of human flourishing for a better future. Our lives are changing as are the lives of those in our sphere of influence.

Engaging in Living Educational Theory Research provides the process for better knowing yourself, your values, and for knowing if you are living according to those values or if you are a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41). This methodology guides you to live that sense of joy and satisfaction as a life-long process of commitment to improving yourself and the world around you. Here is what Michelle Vaughan says about creating her own living-educational-theory:

I found I could not do this work alone, and through the mentorship I received from those within this field, I was encouraged to talk about my work, share my thinking and expose my core. While initially uncomfortable, once I started, I found that I could not stop. Like a good book, I would share my story with anyone who would listen, making new pathways for this energy to travel. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 76)

It is an expectation of Living Educational Theory Research to make public the practical 'embodied' knowledge (Hocking *et al.*, 2001, xviii) that is being expressed in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41). Through the use of action-reflection cycles we engage in a systematic inquiry into improving our practice and into making public an explanation of our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of social formations. Using values as standards of judgment and explanatory principles, we deepen and extend our explanations of educational influence in our own learning and in the learning of others. This involves a growing understanding of the nature of the educational knowledge that is created in justifying claims to know one's own educational influences in learning.

It is important to emphasize the significance of working within a Culture of Inquiry in a community of other practitioner-researchers that supports Living Educational Theory Research. A Culture of Inquiry is a safe, supportive space, in which practitioner-researchers are enabled to share their vulnerabilities, to make explicit their values, and to hold themselves accountable for living according to those values (DeLong, 2020). They learn to recognize when they are not living according to their espoused values and are what Whitehead (1989, p. 41) calls 'living contradictions'.

Focusing our educational responsibilities in generating, sustaining and developing Culture of Inquiry for Living Educational Theory Research with the values of human flourishing, I accept what Maxwell (2021) refers to as the two great problems in learning: the first problem, learning about the universe, about ourselves and other forms of life as a part of the universe. Maxwell refers to this as knowledge-inquiry. We can see the successes of science and technology in knowledge-inquiry. However, I agree with

Maxwell that knowledge-inquiry has failed in contributing to the second great problem of learning, focused on how to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world.

A wise world would encourage and support teachers' professionalism through a Living Educational Theory in Culture of Inquiry approach and contribute to resolving this second problem with what Maxwell refers to as wisdom-inquiry. Included within my explanation are my values of being a citizen-scholar and exercising my educational responsibilities, is the recognition that my unique constellation of values is relationally dynamic. Hence my use of these values as explanatory principles, means that my explanatory principles are relationally dynamic. Based on the results of this research, I advocate for the creation of living-educational-theories in Culture of Inquiry using dialogue as a research-method with visual data, and for intercultural education for improving teacher professionalism for the future and for human flourishing.

In conclusion to this passage on results, I remind myself that with the concepts of a relational perspective of knowing, knowers/subjects are fallible, that criteria are corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that standards are socially constructed and thus continually in need of critique and reconstruction. However, they help me explain my relational ways of knowing and my uncertainty about standards of knowing and judging (Thayer-Bacon's 2003, p.7).

Significance

The significance of this research is in the values-based explanation of how the Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry are spreading the educational influences in learning of practitioner-researchers through their teaching roles. It is significant as well that the research explains our educational influence, as our living-educational-theories are contributing to a global, social movement for the creation of a future with life-affirming, energy-flowing values of human flourishing, that mitigate and overcome the alienating power of inequities, violence and negative forces.

The most power and significance in learning to create their own living-educational- theory resides in the practitioner-researchers finding confidence in their own 'I' and recognizing their embodied knowledge.

When I use 'I', I am not referring to an egotistical 'I'. I am referring to the relational 'I' of infinite conversation, described by Buber (1970). (Whitehead, in Bradbury, 2015, p. 246)

The risk for a school or university system is that once the teachers find their own voices, have control over their own learning, exert, "creative compliance" (MacDonald, 1987, p. 5) and take responsibility for their own professionalism, challenging the inequitable power structures that exist in our places of practice (Wood *et al.*, 2019), they will not willingly give that power back and accede to 'power over'.

If you, like me have questioned the meaning and purpose of your existence, I think you will experience hope and fulfillment in creating and sharing your living-educational- theories as we all seek to improve what we are doing in contributing to a flow of values and understandings of human flourishing. I hope, dear reader, that you will engage with my research and provide some input on how I might strengthen it, so that we can all be "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2019) in a loving and supportive Culture of Inquiry.

Looking Ahead

Going forward, my intentions are to improve my understanding of Eastern Wisdom Traditions, their languages, concepts and images, and be more vigilant about the impositional, colonizing nature of the Western Critical Tradition and the English language as I mentor practitioner-researchers to create their living-educational-theories in Culture of Inquiry. I plan to find ways to mitigate "epistemicide" (Santos, 2014) in other ways of knowing, and continue to research my practice for its improvement as well as mentoring others to do the same. At the time of writing, I have submitted proposals for AERA in 2023.

It is my hope that you sense our love in our work in this Living Educational Theories Culture of Educational Inquiry and wish to join us to be loved into learning in our 'Loving Learning Conference' as Zuber-Skerritt (2017, p. 224)), expresses it:

In conclusion, as Michelle says of our Culture of Inquiry, "I believe our intentional love and support for one another shine through in these images." and Parbati says it is there that we connect "to the Heart Chakra". I hope that you, dear reader, will join our Culture of Inquiry!

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