

Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis explicates four key ideas that have emerged through researching my practice to improve it:

- Living-Educational-Theory Praxis
- Living-boundaries
- The development of *inclusive* gifted and talented education from an *educational* perspective
- Living-Theory TASC⁶

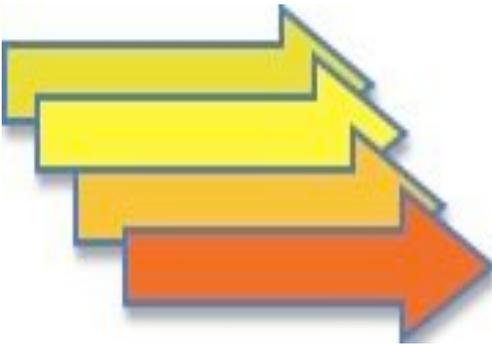


Figure 2 Arrows used to illustrate traditional social science research



Figure 3 Smoke used to illustrate flows of energy in research as a living process – picture by [Salvatore Vuono / FreeDigitalPhotos.net](http://www.freeDigitalPhotos.net)

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.

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. So it is with the living process of my enquiry and learning, the key ideas I offer, the form of my communication and your

engagement with the thesis. I present my thesis as a multimedia research narrative in the hope of evoking within you an empathetic resonance (Whitehead, 2010a and 2010b) with the values-based aspirations I have for my work and improving practice to stimulate your imagination with possibilities for your own.

To understand my thesis, I believe you need to know something of the social, cultural, historical and political backdrop to my life and work, and I

⁶ TASC – Thinking Actively in a Social Context (Wallace and Adams, 1993)

think you need to know a something of me. So, I begin the introduction by giving a little background as **context**.

Even in these few paragraphs I realise I have used words and terms such as 'Living-Educational-Theory', 'praxis', 'living-boundaries', 'multimedia narrative', each redolent with my experiences but they may carry different meanings for you. Therefore in this introduction I will clarify some of the **language** I use to help us develop common understandings.

As I intimated in the preamble, my intention in creating this thesis is to make an original and significant contribution to educational knowledge, legitimated by the Academy. I create and offer this knowledge, not as an esoteric intellectual exercise, but in the hope of making a worthwhile contribution to this world as a better place to be. I am keen to create and contribute a gift of quality so I spell out the **evaluative criteria** I am applying. In doing so I am placing the thesis within an academic body of knowledge and indicating the nature of the research journey I have been on.

All journeys have to begin and finish but in a narrative of my living-theory it is like trying to define the start and end of a Möbius strip (Figure 4).

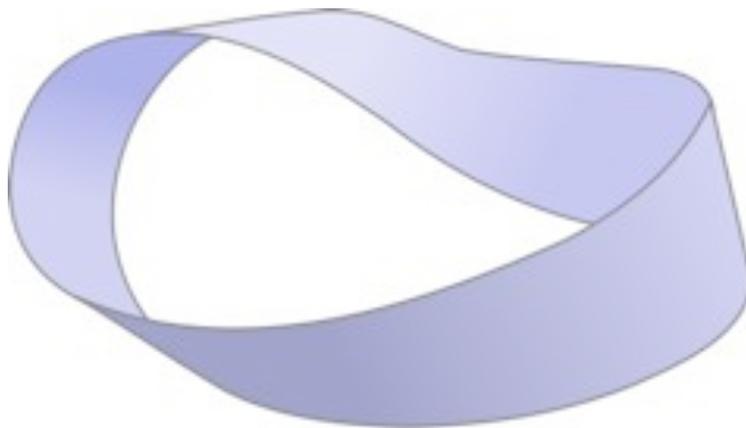


Figure 4 Möbius strip (<http://www.wpclipart.com> public domain)

There are many inter-related and inter-connected stories that comprise this research but only one thread can be narrated at a time, and many interesting nooks and crannies have to be left unexplored. Given an awareness of those limitations I offer in this introduction an outline of **the structure of the thesis**.

Sections as signposts in this chapter

1.1 Setting the scene

1.1.1 Contexts

1.1.1.1 The normative background of my research

1.1.1.2 The evolution of my thinking

1.1.1.3 The development of my work leading APEX

1.1.1.4 What is important to me

- 1.1.2 Language
- 1.1.3 Evaluative criteria
- 1.2 Contributions to educational knowledge and structure of the thesis
 - 1.2.1 Living-Educational-Theory praxis (Chapter 2)
 - 1.2.2 Clarification of my ontological and social values in living-boundaries (Chapter 3)
 - 1.2.3 The evolution my living-educational-theory praxis (Chapter 4)
 - 1.2.4 The development of *inclusive* gifted and talented education from an *educational* perspective (Chapter 5)
 - 1.2.5 A creative use of multimedia narratives in researching the meanings of values in living-boundaries, and developing generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability (Chapter 6)
 - 1.2.6 Living-theory TASC: A relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis (Chapter 7)
 - 1.2.7 What have I learned and what now? (Chapter 8)
- 1.3 Postscript

1.1 Setting the scene

1.1.1 Contexts

‘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)

I share Collingwood’s view that an answer, or response, can only be understood in the context of the question. To understand the context of the question in this case, includes understanding something of me, as the person asking the question, “How can I improve what I do?” As you engage with the videos, text and images that follow, I hope to give you sufficient understanding of the normative backdrop of my research and practice, what is important to me, the evolution of my thinking and the development of my work, for you to understand the questions to which this thesis offers a response.

1.1.1.1 *The normative backdrop of my research*

At this point I ask you to watch this short video clip (1.28 mins) recorded at one of the CPD⁷ group meetings I support and facilitate with Jack

⁷ CPD - Continuing Professional Development

Whitehead. Each person had said a little about what was important to him or her, which was videoed – then came my turn.



Video 1 What really matters to me <http://tinyurl.com/3qz6sls>

By inviting you to engage with this short video I hope you will begin to know something of me that text alone would not accomplish, such as my personal energy and passion for improving education that is the substance of this thesis and my practice. In listening to the words you will gather something about my values, beliefs and aspirations. Depending on your own background, you may also have been alerted to pressures I was under at that time. These pressures came from changes in regulations and are alluded to by another speaker making reference to “CRBs⁸”, and the subsequent laughter. It is this formal backdrop to the practice I have researched to improve, I introduce now.

Since I began this research programme in 2006 Governments have come and gone. Government policies and strategies have come and gone, including a ‘gifted and talented strategy’. Government departments have come and gone, while others have repeatedly changed their names and functions. A similar upheaval has been caused in the functioning of local authorities by changes in national Government demands and impositions. The constants are ever-increasing legislation, targets and constraints. The national Government, irrespective of which one, has increasingly imposed practice, and actuarial forms of accountability on schools, local authorities and other publicly- funded institutions. This has been to the detriment of work to improve education as the House of Lords has acknowledged:

‘Able, brilliant and skilled professionals do not thrive in an environment where much of their energies are absorbed by the need to comply with a raft of detailed requirements...’ (House of Lords, 2009, p.15)

While the current Government (a coalition of the Liberal and Conservative parties elected in 2010), appears in places to be reducing the ‘raft of detailed requirements’, the forms of ‘accountability for the delivery of key outcomes’ are filling the space created. I understand that as an educational professional I account to others: to the ethical standards of my professional body; to my employer, and, most importantly, I hold myself to account to me, and to my own values. When I talk of being ‘accountable’ I do so with an understanding that I need to provide a values-based explanation for why I

⁸ CRBs – checks made through the Criminal Records Bureau. The procedures and bureaucracy involved were continually expanding at that time.

do what I do. I distinguish between evaluation and accountability and elaborate on approaches that are generative and transformational in Chapter 6 (pages 191- 221)

I believe as a professional I am responsible for my practice and I am beholden to continually seek to understand, explain and improve it. To do that I believe I need to research my practice, understanding research in the way Eisner (1993) expresses:

‘We do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there.’ (p.10)

I go further than Eisner and say that I do research to try to understand in order to make this *world*, and not just our schools, a better place to be for *all*.

Since the general election changes continue faster than ever. These problems are not new, nor are they unique to education, public services or this country, as illustrated by this well-known quotation I occasionally find on school staffroom walls:

‘We trained very hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form into teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress, while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation’ (wrongly attributed to Gaius Petronius Arbiter 210 BCE but possibly dates back to at least the Second World War - <http://www.wussu.com/writings/quotes.htm>)

Sachs (1999) describes the impact on educators and education in Australia of politically directed changes. She shows the influence of a shift from, what she refers to as ‘democratic professionalism’, to ‘managerialist professionalism’ with the emergence of an ‘entrepreneurial identify’. Her reference to experiences of New Zealand in the late 1980’s serves to re-emphasise that the current social and political upheaval and contradictions, being experienced in England decades later, is not a new phenomenon.

The result is not just increased workloads for everyone who works in education. Stress is created by the demand for compliance with practice that is not values-based, and neither affirms or enhances gifts of talents, expertise or knowledge, created and offered by those with the courage to try. This holds true for children and young persons as much as for adults. I will return to this in more detail in Chapter 4 (pages 119 – 154) when I outline the evolution of my living-theory praxis. Having briefly begun to point to some of the ‘formal’ context of my practice within which I was researching, I now want to give you an insight into something of my intra-personal context.

1.1.1.2 The evolution of my thinking

I graduated with a degree in psychology from Hull University and then, after qualifying and working as a teacher in Sheffield, completed a professional Masters degree in Educational Psychology at Birmingham University. I began my career as an educational psychologist in Birmingham and continued to work for school psychology services in Devon and then Avon. In 1996 Avon Local Authority was abolished and I was transferred to B&NES⁹, one of the four new unitary authorities that replaced Avon. Shortly after transferring I began to develop my ideas concerning ‘high ability’ in children and young people. The more I explored this the more I came to the conclusion that terms such as ‘high ability’, ‘successful learner’, ‘higher order thinking’ were used interchangeably and there was no reason to believe that each child could not make an outstanding contribution to society during their lives given motive, means and opportunity.

As I developed my enquiry as a project, it became increasingly obvious to me that I could describe what I was doing and how I was deciding where to devote time and resources, but I did not have a defensible rationale, underpinned by educational theory, for why I was doing what I was doing. I also knew that the form of reporting and evaluation based on figures and targets did not reflect the difference I was trying to make. This was, and is, important: “You get what you look for”, as I have learned from my experience and background in psychology. So these were two major concerns that I could find no resolution to, although I was becoming clearer about my research questions and their importance.

While working for the Child Guidance and School Psychology Service in Birmingham, I registered for a research degree. I eventually abandoned this as I realised the limitations of the form of research I was using, which was, and is, prevalent in education. Suffice it to say here that while I was drawn to trying to understand academic research and psychology in the context of my work as an educational psychologist, I was continually frustrated by the limitations of the approaches to research that I came across. I will elaborate on those limitations later in Chapter 2 (pages 51 – 85) where I introduce Living-Theory praxis.

As my work in ‘high ability’ developed, so my interest in working towards a research doctorate was renewed. I felt the discipline entailed would help me to develop my understanding and keep it as a priority as I dealt with the day-to-day practicalities of life, which can easily dominate every waking moment. However, it was not until I began to become acquainted in 2004 with Living-Educational-Theory (Whitehead, 1989a) that I was motivated to commit my time, resources and energy to embarking on an academically-disciplined research programme, with an enthusiasm born of an anticipation of something satisfying, productive and worthwhile emerging. The evolution of my thinking and the development of APEX, which had become my fulltime work, came together as I began to research my practice to improve it as a Living-Theory researcher registered on an MPhil/PhD research programme in 2006.

⁹ B&NES - Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority

1.1.1.3 The development of my work leading APEX

As I have said, my professional area of influence, during the research programme, has been as senior educational psychologist leading the development and implementation of local authority policy promoting ‘high ability’ learning of children and young people. I give a brief, chronological account here by way of introduction and a more detailed account in Chapter 4 (pages 119 – 154) where I narrate my living-theory praxis.

The project was called APEX¹⁰. I began developing APEX as part of my work with the school psychology service prior to the National Gifted and Talented Strategy. This is important as it meant that I was not constrained by the impositions of the dominating practices and beliefs emanating from the national Government. The project grew until I was moved from the school psychology service to manage APEX fulltime. APEX finishes August 2012 as a result of changes made by the Government to the roles, responsibilities and funding of local authorities and schools.

I began improving practice while I worked for the school psychology service by organising events for teachers with field leading practitioners and academics, and running workshops myself. This gave me direct access to the ideas of people at the forefront of the field, (examples are given on page 127). This gave rise to my belief that one key area to research was concerned with motivation. I looked for opportunities for children and young people to find a passion for creating knowledge in an area of their personal interest. I found few and as a consequence I developed a programme of workshops to broaden the horizons of children and young people, and the adults that worked with them, beyond school as I illustrate further on page 128. I intended the APEX Saturday workshops to offer opportunities for them to find inspiration for future ambitions, become confident to go to new places, meet and work with others who shared their enthusiasm, and extend their experiences and expertise (Huxtable, 2003). Most importantly I wanted to provide opportunities for children and young people to enjoy learning in an area of personal interest and experience themselves as valued, successful co-learners, capable of creating knowledge of the world, themselves, and themselves in and of the world.

While my focus was on the experience of the young I also wanted to reach adults, as they are the ones who are able to make a long-term difference to young learners. Many workshop providers and assistants were teachers. I wanted them to have the opportunity to be the educator they wanted to be, educationally engaging with enthusiastic learners in an area of their own passion, without the constraints of the ‘given curriculum’. I also wanted parents/carers to have the opportunity to venture beyond their local neighbourhood to extend their knowledge of educational possibilities that exist for their offspring and themselves.

These two threads of my work; improving educational relationships, space and opportunities for and with children and young people, and those for and

¹⁰ APEX – All as Able Pupils Extending Opportunities

with educators, provide the work-place context of my research. The threads are distinct, yet inter-related. For instance, application to the workshops was made through the schools on behalf of children and young people. In this way I hoped to provide a motivation for teachers to talk with their pupils/students about aptitudes, interests and enthusiasms beyond the given curriculum and help their young learners to develop their personal(ised) life-long curriculum. Some schools enabled children to share what they learnt on the workshops, which enhanced the child's learning and that of their classmates (and on occasion, adults as well). Many teachers have been involved with the workshops and as a result they have extended their knowledge and skills and taken ideas back to their classrooms. Vicky Tucker's account, accredited at Masters level (Tucker, 2008), illustrates the influence this has had in the learning and practice of an educator, working in a school for pupils presenting challenging behaviour, involved in different aspects of APEX,

I developed and ran a self-funded pilot programme of workshops in 1998/9. This provided the basis for a successful bid to be made in 2000 to NOF¹¹ so there would be no cost to participants. Young people made a presentation to the council about the opportunities they had experienced, so that when NOF funding finished in October 2003 the Authority continued to fund the workshops. As the project grew, the Authority extended financial support until I could develop and manage the whole APEX project, including activities such as school-based INSET¹² and CPD programmes, coherently. When the control of funds shifted from the Authority to schools, the Schools Forum, which managed the allocation of the DSG¹³, continued the financial support for APEX.

APEX became an Authority-wide programme to support and promote inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision. During one of the restructurings of the education department, my line management was moved from the school psychology service although I continued as a senior educational psychologist. I gave an account of why I continue to see the work as an expression of improving my practice as an educational psychologist in a paper presented at the 2006 annual conference of BERA (Huxtable, 2006b).

Like Oancea and Pring (2008) I believe that, 'Deliberations over the aims of education are essentially moral—concerning the qualities and virtues, the capabilities and understandings that, under the banner of 'education', are thought worth promoting' (p.29). What I believe is worth promoting is reflected in the pedagogical assumptions underpinning my practice. I believe that each person, irrespective of age, is capable of:

- Being an expert in their own learning and enhancing their expertise
- Developing and offering talents as life-enhancing gifts

¹¹ NOF - The New Opportunity Fund

¹² INSET - In Service Training

¹³ DSG - Dedicated Schools Grant provided the Government

- Creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, of themselves, and of 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 evolve their own living-theory.

I am taking a belief to be what I believe to be true and a value as that which gives meaning and purpose to my life.

As I was developing my ideas about high ability, inspired by the notion of the 'sports-approach' of Freeman (1998), 'successful intelligence' by Sternberg (1997), and others, I wanted a rationale for developing APEX. I therefore began to develop a framework drawing on Renzulli's (1997) notion of three types of learning opportunities.

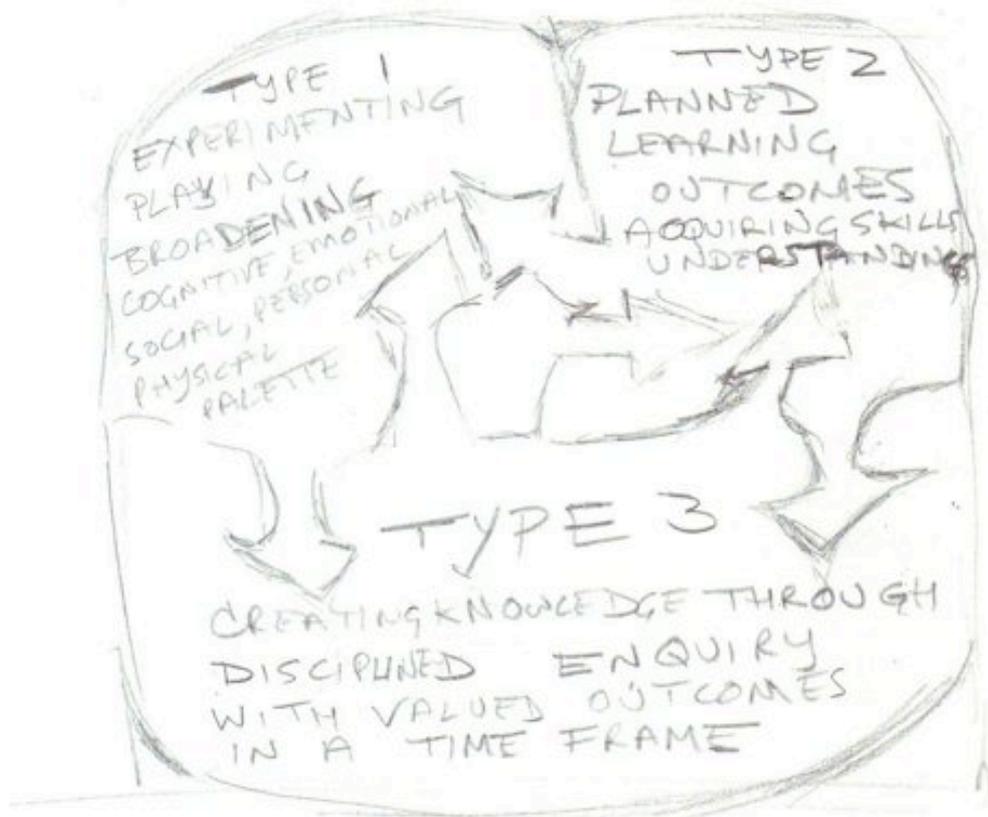


Figure 5 Summary representation of Renzulli's three types of learning opportunities

In developing a framework for my work I was particularly influenced by the work of Wallace (1993) on TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) and Whitehead's (1989a) Living-Educational-Theory. The following few slides, which I have used often in presentations to various audiences, summarise key points of the framework I have used to develop relationships, space and opportunities to enhance educational practice and provision.

APEX – developing and supporting educational relationships, space and opportunities for Children & Young People as:



Thought-full, thoughtful learners, knowing who they are & want to be. People who have informed aspirations with the confidence & competence to pursue them life-long

Learners who can contribute to & benefit from society



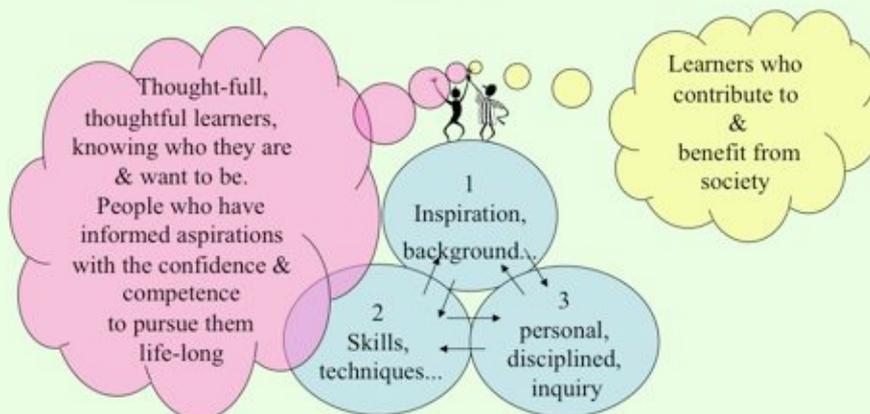
Educational learning opportunities:

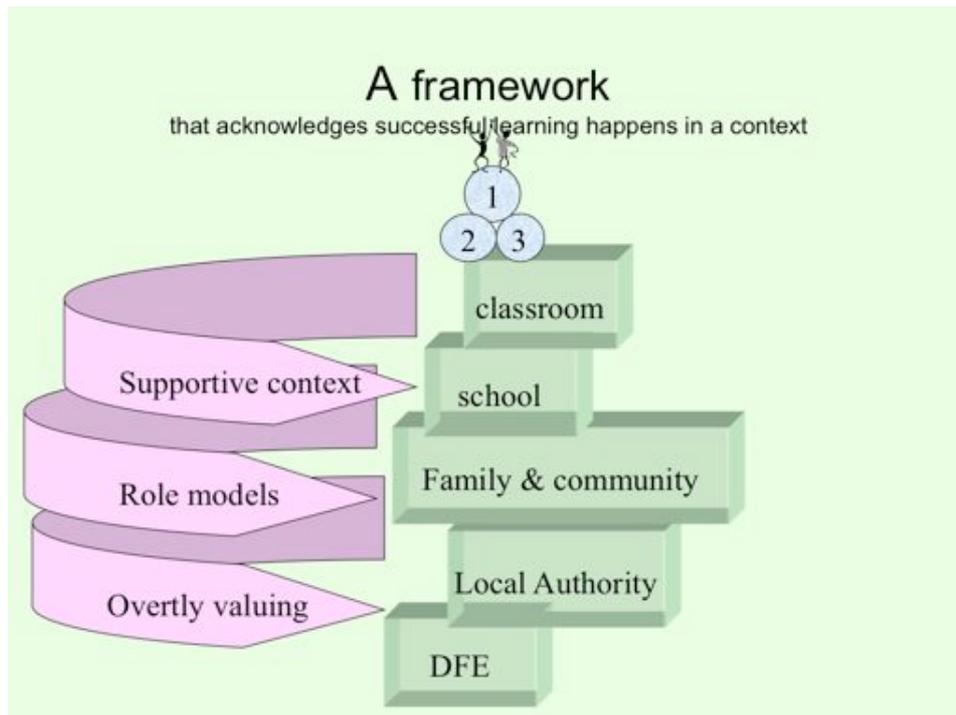
(Drawing on Renzulli, 1997, 2011; Wallace, 1993, 2006; Whitehead, 1989, 2011)

- which open eyes and broaden horizons ... (1)
- to learn the skills of an expert inquirer able to research their passion, skills such as metacognition, philosophical thinking, project management etc and 'field' knowledge and expertise... (2)
- to create and offer educational knowledge of the world, of self and self in and of the world, by researching areas of personal interest, in a disciplined manner, within a time frame and with a valued outcome. (3)

A framework for developing APEX

that acknowledges learners need a diet of educational learning opportunities
based on J. Renzulli's Enrichment Model (1997)





I go into more detail in Chapter 4 (pages 119-154) where I describe the evolution of my living-theory praxis and Chapter 5 (pages 155-190) where I introduce the development of inclusive gifted and talented education from an educational perspective. Here I want to bring the strands of the normative background of my research, the evolution of my thinking and the development of my practice, together with a refocus through the video I invited you to engage with at the beginning <http://tinyurl.com/3qz6sls>

1.1.1.4 What is important to me

As you engaged with that video I hope you had some sense of my values as an educational professional. I have worked in public (state) education all my working life, first as a teacher and then as an educational psychologist. I am committed to inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian public (state) education and to developing educational policy, provision, practice and theory to benefit all. I believe that education is more than schooling. I understand schooling to be concerned with the efficient transmission of knowledge, skills and understandings. I see the roles and responsibilities of an educational professional requiring more than the skills of an instructor or trainer and someone who maintains the status quo. Education, I believe, is concerned with enhancing the ability of each person to develop, offer, and thoughtfully value, talents and knowledge of the world, themselves, and themselves in and of the world as gifts that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. I like the way Umberto Maturana communicates something of these sentiments in 'A Student's Prayer' (translated and abbreviated from *El Sentido de lo Humano*. Dolmen Ediciones, Santiago de Chile, 1994 by Marcial F. Losada in a commentary in Maturana and Bunnell, 1999, p.61). In bringing in Maturana's poem I intend to show that the values that are at the heart of my desire to improve educational practice are not limited by nationality or discipline. Maturana is a Chilean biologist and philosopher.

Don't impose on me what you know,
I want to explore the unknown
And be the source of my own discoveries.
Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery.

The world of your truth can be my limitation;
Your wisdom my negation.
Don't instruct me; let's walk together.
Let my riches begin where yours ends.

Show me so that I can stand
On your shoulders.
Reveal yourself so that I can be
Something different.

You believe that every human being
Can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
When I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am
By listening to yourself.
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you.

Although Maturana's poem is in the voice of a student, I can hear the voice of an educator with a love for each student as someone with a unique and valuable contribution to make, to their own lives and that of others, an educator who wants to express an educational responsibility towards, but not for their student, an educator who wants to enable his student to go beyond the constraints of reimagining the past to realising dreams of better things not yet begun, an educator who recognises the damage of unwittingly being a living contradiction. I can recognise a great deal of that educator in me.

Through my learning adventures and journeys I have progressed from practice focussed on perceiving weakness and creating remediating programmes, to that of a senior educational psychologist with responsibility for leading and coordinating the development of inclusive gifted and talented theory, practice, provision and policy from an educational perspective, in a local authority, with the ambition of enhancing the educational experience of all children and young people.

I continue to believe each person is unique and has a responsibility to contribute to improving their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others. I also continue to give primacy to my educational responsibility, which is to enhance the experiences of children and young persons that enable them to improve their ability to bring themselves into their own presence to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others.

Through this research programme I want to create, offer and recognise an educational gift of value. Fukuyama (1992) an American political scientist and economist, acknowledges a truth psychologists identify:

‘Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth.’ (p. xvii)

He makes me aware that despite my hope to offer knowledge freely as a gift I am aware of living a contradiction in feeling a desire for recognition of my efforts. I know that in offering a gift of the knowledge I have created I can be accused of arrogance and self-aggrandisement by others and myself. I believe such accusations to be ill- founded and am prepared to deal with the emotional turmoil caused in reconciling the recognition of myself as significant and insignificant simultaneously. From a different field Kagan (1998), a Talmudic scholar, says:

‘Our inner connection to an infinity which reaches beyond our individuality is not an incidental attribute or an icon of a particular culture. This connection defines our humanity: it is the only characteristic which distinguishes us... To lose this inner connection is to lose our humanity. It is no accident that as we forget that which makes us human, we come to view ourselves as intelligent animals or machines. ...

This transcendent connection is an objective expression of our humanity. Viewing ourselves like animals or machines is not an alternative vision of man; it is his destruction...If we cannot be what we think we are, our existence is devoid of true substance, for we have no basis in reality and no place in the order of being” (pp.19-20)

These two couple of paragraphs foreground the source of many of the tensions I experience in being what I think I am: the contradiction between expressing and connecting with a sense of humanity in everything I do, and the dehumanising nature of much of what I am expected to comply with. I also like the way Kagan expresses a notion of infinity. I feel he describes the sense I have of connection with other people, who do not necessarily live in my own time and place, and feeling myself as meaningful in the boundary between my self and other people who share a desire to contribute to a flourishing humanity.

A sense of my self as distinct and unique, but also at one with others in ‘an infinity which reaches beyond’, is important to me. It is the essence of what I want to communicate by ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values. The clarification and expression of these values is at the core of the research narrated in this thesis. The conundrum of how to hold ‘i’ and ‘we’ together in an ‘i~we’ relationship (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2006) that flows with these values is expressed for me in the words of Hillel, which have stayed with me since I first read them as a child:

‘If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?’ (Ethics of the Fathers, *Pirkei Avot*, 1:14)

I am using ‘i’ and ‘we’ to point to self and collective that is neither subordinate nor superordinate, but exist in an 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 2 Nelson Mandela on Ubuntu

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODO4WiDsEBO>

I clarify further this sense of an ‘i~we’ relationship, for instance, in Chapter 2 on page 53 and 54 where I begin to clarify the nature of living-boundaries, and Chapter 6 on page 197 where I illustrate how I make creative use of multimedia narrative to communicate values researched in living-boundaries . A fuller understanding of the complex ecologies (Lee and Rochon, 2009) of my contexts will emerge as this narrative progresses but I wish to leave this for the time being and begin to develop a shared language with you.

1.1.2 Language

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "It means just what I choose it to mean - neither more or less." (Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There, Lewis Carroll, 1871); I wish he were right. In my experience meanings are slippery and can transmute unnoticed if a shared understanding is taken for granted. Although English has an enormous vocabulary it is still far from precise, with many individual words and phrases carrying a variety of nuanced meanings. This can be a source of considerable misunderstanding as Ginott (1972), an Israeli schoolteacher, child psychologist and psychotherapist, illustrates vividly:

‘On the first day of the new school year, all the teachers in one private school received the following note from their principal:

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

- Gas chambers built by *learned* engineers.
- Children poisoned by *educated* physicians.
- Infants killed by *trained* nurses.
- Women and babies shot and burned by *high school* and *college* graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.’ (p.317)

Ginott shows the importance of developing shared meanings of education that reflect values rather than just a superficial lexicon. Biesta (2006), a philosopher in education coming from the continental tradition, alludes to something similar when he writes, ‘Something has been lost in the shift from the language of education to the language of learning’ (p.14) and argues that we need to develop an educational language. I understand an **educational language** to be one that helps those concerned with improving education to keep connection between ‘learning’ and values that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. So I will begin here the process of clarifying some of the key educational language I use throughout the rest of this thesis. In the process of identifying and clarifying some of the key words and phrases I will also begin to paint the theoretical and practical backdrop of the thesis.

What follows are a few of the words and phrases I use commonly and which are open to various interpretations other than those I am giving them. I want to stress this is a beginning and a fuller meaning will, I hope, emerge through the multimedia narrative where meanings are created ostensibly, and through an iterative process. As this is a Living-Educational-Theory

thesis I had best begin with what I mean by **my living-educational-theory (or living-theory)**. Whitehead originated Living-Educational-Theory so I want to offer you his words to clarify my meanings initially:

‘I use the idea of living theories (Whitehead, 1989) to distinguish the explanations of action researchers from the general explanations in propositional theories that dominate the refereed international journals. I am thinking particularly of living theories that are constituted by the unique explanations of action researchers of their educational influences in learning. In propositional theories, explanations for the actions and learnings of individuals are derived from conceptual abstractions of relations between propositions. In living theories individuals generate their own explanations of their educational influences in their own learning. The explanatory principles in living-theory explanations are energy-flowing values embodied and expressed in practice.’ (Whitehead, 2009a, pp.85-86)

In my own writings I now use capitals to distinguish **Living-Educational-Theory research** from an **individual’s living-educational-theory**. To summarise, I understand Living-Theory research to be concerned with a continual process of the researcher evolving their understanding and offering values-based explanations (the why) of their educational influence as they work to improve their values-based practice. I understand my living-theory as my values-based explanation of why I have sought to bring about change and the nature of the change I am trying to make. My living-theory account includes narratives and explanations of what I have done to enhance the educational influence I have in my learning, the learning of others and social formations, in the process of living my values as fully as I can through my practice. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) elaborate on their use of the word ‘living’:

‘These theories are living in the sense that they are our theories of practice, generated from within our living practices, our present best thinking that incorporates yesterday into today, and which holds tomorrow already within itself.’ (p.3)

They point to a process through which theory is continually evolving with past, present and future existing in a dynamic relationship. As I research my practice to improve it and create a living-theory account, I clarify and develop my ontological and societal values as explanatory principles and living standards of judgment. I understand **ontological values** to be what it is that gives meaning and purpose to my life. I clarify my ontological and societal values in Chapter 3 (pages 86-118). When I refer to values as **living standards of judgment** I do so following Laidlaw (1996). I understand my standards of judgment to be ‘living’ in the sense they are evolving and are in a dynamic and reciprocal inter-relationship with my values and the practice through which they emerge. Rather than being seen as a reflection of poor research-design they are recognized here as an inherent and valid feature of Living-Theory research.

This thesis is an **educational narrative**. By educational narrative I mean a story that offers descriptions with explanations created of a learning journey, which in their creation and offering enhance the learning of the teller and their audience/s. The words ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are sometimes used interchangeably. I am characterising a narrative as a story with a plot, or a story-line, that takes the reader or listener to an identifiable conclusion, climax or point that the narrator is intending to communicate. I go into more detail about the use of multimedia narratives in researching the meanings of values in living-boundaries in Chapter 6 (pages 191-221).

Educational narratives are generative and transformational. By **‘generative’** I want to communicate a sense of research narratives that carry energy that generates hopeful, productive and life-affirming and life-enhancing activity. By **‘transformational’** I want to communicate forms of storying that evolve new thinking and practice that does not replicate the past but enables us to transcend it.

As an educational psychologist I spent years wondering how to evaluate my work. I was familiar with the approaches built on notions of ‘cause and effect’, which have contributed to the development of such concepts as ‘impact indicators’, and ‘value added’. Yet I was, and am, aware that life is much more complicated and subtle than that, and I do not believe I can ascribe to myself the power that such approaches require. I find Whitehead’s (1989a) notion of **‘educational influence’** far more nuanced and this has enabled me to look at my work in a different way. Like Whitehead, for me to feel I have had an educational influence in the learning of another I need evidence that what I have offered has been transmuted by them to contribute to their progress to giving expression to their best intent, which is informed by their values: I do not believe I have had an educational influence if what I offer is unthinkingly replicated.

For me to feel I have had an educational influence in the learning of a social formation I need to see some evidence that I have contributed to developing a context where humanity can flourish. By educational influence I also mean the contribution I make to learning in the direction of my values with the **‘best intent’** of the other/s in sharp focus. I am using the notion of intent quite specifically and giving it my own meaning. 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/s 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.

My practice is concerned with the development of opportunities for educational experiences. **Educational experiences** are those that enhance

the possibilities of the learner coming into their own presence; to know the person they are and want to be and contribute to them developing their educational influence in learning and life.

I understand an **educational knowledge-base** to be that which educators draw on and contribute to, to improve the quality of education as a values-based process and experience. Whitehead (2010a) and Pring (2000) make further distinctions between educational knowledge and the knowledge of education created in the disciplines, which I elaborate on in Chapter 2 (pages 51-85). However the prime distinction that has been useful to me is educational knowledge being distinguished by reference to the researcher, and/or practitioner's, ontological and societal values and educational intent.

In describing my **research as educational** I also intend to communicate that I am researching to improve inclusive and inclusional practice. By **'inclusive'** I mean contexts where each person develops, and values, themselves and other people and the unique and valuable contribution we can each make to evolve a humane world where humanity can flourish. By **inclusional** I follow Rayner (2005) and mean a dynamic awareness and integration, of receptive, responsive and co-creational space and boundaries, which comprise my complex ecology of being. The following well-known video clip by Alan Rayner, known as 'the paper dance', begins to communicate something of what I mean by 'inclusional'. Having seen the reaction of many teachers, unfamiliar with Rayner's work and with academia, to this video clip I know that it communicates the notion of inclusionality that has influenced me far more eloquently than many pages of text. Hence I include it here, not simply as reference but to develop an understanding of inclusionality ostensibly.



Video 3 Alan Rayner's paper dance introducing inclusionality 5minutes 9seconds

<http://tinyurl.com/42svmwb>

A notion of **pedagogy** is necessarily part of my journey as the word is widely used in English education circles. Zembylas (2007), from Cyprus, expresses a meaning of pedagogy:

‘...broadly speaking, pedagogy may be defined as the relational encounter among individuals through which many possibilities for growth are created’ (p.332)

Unlike some definitions, this makes reference to pedagogy being concerned with real persons and the educational relationship and space between them. An idea of an **inclusional pedagogy** that Adler-Collins (2007), from within an English, Japanese and Buddhist context, describes, drawing on Farren (2005) extends my notion of pedagogy further. Adler-Collins describes a space for informed listening, which acknowledges the differences of the other as a celebration of diversity and boundaries as permeable and dynamic:

‘My teaching space, as a space, needs to be both bounded and open, bounded in the sense that it can take on the charge/energy/association of being associated with study as opposed to being unbounded as in social activities, and open in the sense that students can develop a feeling of ownership and of belonging in the space.’ (Adler-Collins, 2007, p.282)

Adler-Collins expresses the tension educators experience in holding together the demands of employer, community and others, to ‘deliver’ a given curriculum, and responding to the living curriculum of each learner as a person with whom they have an educational relationship. I intend through my praxis to contribute to learners evolving and following their living curricula, characterised by flows of **life-affirming and life-enhancing energy**, in educational relationships space and opportunities that are inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. I am making a distinction between life-affirming and life-enhancing; the former affirming what is and the latter contributing to the development of what might be.

Flows of energy are difficult to communicate in words alone, so I invite you to look at this short video of part of an ‘Improving Practice Conversation Café’. These were weekly sessions at the local council offices where staff from Children’s Services and Jack Whitehead (currently Professor, Liverpool Hope University and Visiting Fellow, University of Bath) met to share, over coffee and croissants, what is giving us each ‘a buzz’ or ‘challenge’ and help each other to research and improve practice. At this particular session Chris Jones (then Senior Inclusion Officer) has brought her Masters dissertation and is asking us (myself, Jack Whitehead and Kate Kemp, then Pupil Support Manager) to act as a validation group for her. This clip shows the first 10 minutes of an hour-long session. If you run the cursor back and forth I hope you can sense something of the flow of energy (Huxtable, 2009b). While I enjoy the full clip, the point I am trying to make about energy I believe can be understood within the first few moments (23 seconds into the clip) where Chris is asking ‘...is what I’m writing, is it rubbish?’ and her laughter is shared by the group.

Chris, Jack, Kate and Marie in validation - clip 1 of 4



Video 4 Sharing a sense of flow of life-affirming and life-enhancing energy

<http://tinyurl.com/3kxadvt>

I use **well-being** and **well-becoming** to communicate the importance of a quality of life that education contributes to and I hope you get a sense of both in the video clip you have just watched. Bonila (2008), in the context of researching a Brazilian community programme, provides a definition of well-being:

‘Well-being is a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one’s goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life.’(p.10)

This resonates with me. Sometimes that state may not be experienced in the present, but I work with anticipation and hope, of feelings of well-being in the future, hence my use of the notion of well-becoming.

This thesis is created and offered as an **educational gift** to those dedicated, insightful and loving educators who work continually to develop and offer their talents, expertise and knowledge as educational gifts of inestimable value, but who, with unwarranted humility, often sink into the shadows. I say this is a gift, as I am creating and offering it freely, with the hope, but not the expectation, that it will prove to be of some value to others as well as to myself. In saying, ‘hope, but not expectation’ I am trying to make clear that a gift does not place an implied obligation on others to accept or make use of it, although that is why I have created and offered it.

1.1.3 Evaluative criteria

How do I know whether I am making the difference I want to make? In clarifying my evaluative criteria as well as my language, I clarify what is important to me; this influences, often subliminally, what I do. Evaluation and practice exist in a dynamic relationship, the one influencing the evolution of the other. So, having begun to clarify my language I now want to begin to clarify my evaluative criteria.

Through researching my practice I have understood that I am seeking to generate and enhance inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational relationships, space and opportunities, that provide support and experiences for children and young people to engage in learning journeys and learning adventures that help them:

- Develop dreams, passion for creating life-affirming and life-enhancing knowledge, and the openness to venture to new cognitive, intellectual, social, personal, physical and emotional places in their learning and which inform their evolving aspirations and vocations
- Explore a variety of possibilities of earning a living they might find satisfying, productive and worthwhile if they devoted time and energy to them as an adult
- Develop confidence and competences to pursue their evolving aspirations through enquiring and creating talents, expertise and knowledge as gifts in areas of personal passion and interest
- Experience educational relationships where they, the gifts they create, and their contributions to their own learning, the learning of others and to their communities are valued
- Learn to extend themselves a loving recognition, develop respectful connectedness with diverse persons, and give expression to an educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and social formations
- Explore and evolve understandings of what for them would make their life feel loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile, and to create knowledge of themselves in and of the world.

In short, to support learners as inclusive, emancipated and egalitarian experts in their own learning and life, developing and offering talents, expertise and knowledge as gifts, which enhance their own well-being and well-becoming, and that of others. I recognise myself as learner with an educational responsibility and give expression to this belief in the creation of this thesis.

I create and offer this thesis as an educational gift in the hope that others may find it of some value on their own learning journeys and adventures, even if it does no more than provoke someone to say, 'Well, I can do better than that!' – whatever they mean by 'that', and they get on with creating, offering and being open to their own and other people's life-affirming and life-enhancing gifts. I do this in the belief that such gifts offered freely and communicated widely, will help improve the quality of educational space, relationships and opportunities and contribute to the flourishing of humanity. How do I know where I am being successful or failing so I might improve?

McNiff (2007) talks about a good story told well and powerfully. I understand a good story to be one that offers a valid account of educational influences in learning and is generative and transformational. The focus of a good story is on descriptions and explanations of what is being done by the teller in the process of improving their contribution to the evolution of the world as a better place to be. Laidlaw (2006), in her inaugural professorial lecture at Ninxia University, China, describes a good story as one that contributes to the social good. Many social science research stories of practice are concerned with accounting for the past and are intended to offer justification, vindication or an understanding of what has happened. Like Laidlaw, a *good* story for me is one that can help give life to a better future as it is created in the present. In other words, a good story is educational.

I believe I have a good story to tell, one that explains why I do what I do and the progress I am making in terms of my ontological and social values as my living standards of judgment, which are emerging through researching my practice. I believe it to be a reasoned and reasonable story through which I can show the development of my own learning and the educational influence I have had in my own life and the lives of others.

I understand a story told *well*, to be an educational narrative that has a benevolent influence and communicates the knowledge the traveller has created, in a way that other persons can comprehend, not just with their minds but also emotionally and viscerally. I see living-theory accounts as good stories told well. Whitehead clarifies the criteria I hold in mind to test my story as my living-educational-theory:

‘The primary distinguishing feature of a living educational theory is that it is an individual’s explanation for their educational influence in their own learning and/or in the learning of others and/or in the learning of social formations.

This idea of living educational theory differs from traditional forms of education(al) theory in that traditional theory consists of sets of abstract conceptual relationships. The explanations of educational influences in learning of individuals are derived from the general abstract propositional relations and applied to particular cases that are subsumed by the theory. In living theories each individual is a knowledge-creator who is generating their own explanations for their educational influences in learning. These explanations, for doctorates, always include insights from the traditional propositional theories.

In meeting criteria of originality of mind and critical judgement at doctoral standard, a living theory must communicate the explanation of educational influence in learning in terms of the unique constellation of ontological values that the individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their life.

In using action reflection cycles, in the generation of living educational theories, the individual clarifies the meanings of their

ontological values in the course of their emergence in practice. As these embodied values are expressed and clarified in the course of their emergence in practice they are formed, in the act of communication, into the living epistemological standards of judgment that provide the thesis with its critical standards of judgment.

In terms of research at the forefront of the field in the generation of living educational theories this is focusing on the living logics of inclusionality and inclusional and responsive living standards of judgment for explanations of educational influences in learning...’ (Whitehead posting on the BERA jiscmail practitioner-researcher e-seminar, 16 Feb 2007)

To feel convinced that I have told my story *well* I need to evidence that I have enabled others to understand my living-educational-theory. I also need to know that my story contributes something of use to the thinking and practice of others working to improve educational relationships, space and opportunities. I do not mean that others have to do as I do, or come to the same conclusions as me. I will have failed dismally if I inadvertently persuade someone to thoughtlessly accept or do anything. It is an educational influence I wish to have through communicating my account; it might be that it stimulates an imagined possibility, or provokes a productive debate or someone explores avenues that they might otherwise have ignored. As a living-theory thesis I particularly need evidence that my account offers a well-reasoned and reasonable explanation of my practice and makes an original and significant contribution to educational knowledge.

I want to tell my story *powerfully*. However, that would require I tell it in such a way and in such places that it might have an educational influence in the learning of the powerful, such as policy makers. Here I will focus on telling my good story well and ‘speak truth to power’ (attributed to Milton Mayer who created the title to the American Friends Service Committee pamphlet published 1954).

In the process of creating a communicable educational narrative, I have sought to improve my contribution to the well-being and well-becoming of individuals and collectives. I offer this narrative as a gift of educational knowledge, with the intention of enhancing the generative and transforming narratives other people are creating to improve their own possibilities of living loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile lives. This I believe makes it a story worth telling.

Working with the criteria I have outlined above, the idea of social validity by Habermas (1976, pp 2-3), and my concern to keep the generation of educational knowledge that is validated and legitimated through the Academy connected with educational practice, I ask that this thesis be judged as a good story told well by these criteria:

- Do I present here educational research at the leading edge of the field; provide evidence of originality of mind and critical judgement, and material that is worthy of publication?
- Is my story understandable? Do you know what I have done, why I have done what I have done and how I hold myself to account?
- Is my story believable? Do I provide enough evidence to support my claims to know my practice and that I do seek to live as fully as I can the values that give meaning and purpose to my life?
- Are my educational values and the normative contexts of my work clear?
- Do I offer a well-reasoned and reasonable explanation of why I do what I do?
- In reading this account, has your imagination been stimulated and have those thoughts contributed anything to your educational journey as you seek to improve your educational contexts and relationships?

To submit my story to examination as a doctoral thesis and to defend it at a viva with academics who are educational researchers is, for me, a stringent test of how good my story is and how well I tell it. But as they and others sit in judgment I ask the same as Hymer (2007), who included this quotation in the abstract to his doctoral thesis:

‘Finally, I ask that if this account is judged to be unconvincing, it will have been judged so “on criteria that I avow, not on criteria that I disown.” (Quinn, 1997, pp.4-5)’ (p.5)

1.2 Contributions to educational knowledge and structure of the thesis

Having sketched the contexts, language and evaluative criteria of the thesis, I will conclude this introductory chapter by summarising the key points I will be making and highlight the originality and significance of the knowledge I am claiming to have created. I have created chapters and sections to help you find your way through. However, this should not be taken to imply that the events and activities described are discrete occurrences or that they can be understood without the integration of my developing learning and thinking. A similar issue was tackled in a book I wrote with Barry Hymer and Jack Whitehead (Hymer, Whitehead and Huxtable, 2009):

‘The role of the educator in respect to living theory and inclusional pedagogy could be thought of as having various foci which are held together in a creative tension. We have used the metaphor of a challah before (Hymer, 2007) which might serve us here. A challah is a type of plaited bread; each strand is recognisable as distinct but not discrete and the baking brings the strands together into a new dynamic relationship with each other and within the whole. For this metaphor to be useful we need to have some shared experiences of a challah. So it is with trying to describe and explain our understanding of the role of the educator; we need to begin by

establishing some shared experiences with you of teachers in the role of meaning-makers, as an inclusional pedagogist, as an educator working with a living theory approach to gifted and talented education.’ (pp. 123-124)

The living-boundaries formed within and between the chapters and sections offer creative space for ‘cooking’. ‘Cooking’ not in the sense of fixing and solidifying but used in the slang sense of ‘now we’re cooking!’ when creative connective energy is flowing and something new is emerging that is exciting and carries hope of being worthwhile.

I ask you to keep this metaphor in mind and that I employ an ostensive and iterative process to develop understandings. What you find in the following chapters and sections is not intended as discrete inorganic information to be dissected. I ask you to engage imaginatively and empathetically as well as analytically with the representations of the activities, learning and thinking of what constitute my living-theory praxis. I ask you to notice and enter the living-boundaries between the words, the ideas, the sections, the chapters, as a creative space to form relationally dynamic connections between them, flowing with the energy of your own life-affirming and life-enhancing values, as well as mine.

With that in mind I give a structure here that provides one sign-posted pathway to explore the thesis. I have devised it particularly to clarify the contribution I am claiming my thesis makes to educational knowledge within the academy. This is just one pathway of many I have created in the narration of my learning, and the various iterations of the thesis have been incorporated into papers and presentations. For those who may be interested to view a chronological pathway through the evolution of my thinking and practice I list those papers and presentations in an appendix (appendix 1). I have been asked by my examiners to also provide a pathway through the thesis linked closely to ‘improving practice’. To this end I provide a summary below of the contribution each Chapter makes to the thesis and my claim to be making an original and significant contribution to knowledge. I link the page numbers of related themes to facilitate cross-referencing with my focus on improving practice. I also point to the narratives of improving practice for those practitioners who may be interested in exploring thoughts that might have implications for their own endeavours to improve their practice.

1.2.1 Living-Educational-Theory praxis (Chapter 2)

In this chapter I develop the notion of Living-Educational-Theory (or Living-Theory) praxis, which integrates understanding of living-boundaries, praxis, and Living-Educational-Theory to enable me to improve what I am doing that contributes to making this a better world to be. I clarify the nature of living-boundaries as a co-creative ~ space which I have referred to in an i~we relationship. I elaborate further with examples of living-boundaries created between, for instance, educator and learner, and the worlds of the Academy and school. I show where I believe Living-Theory praxis provides a meaningful approach for me researching to develop my work as a

professional educator. I use 'i' to indicate a self that is not impositional, egotistical, subordinate or dominant with relation to 'we'.

In this chapter I locate my practice as an educational psychologist in a living-boundary between the worlds of the academic psychologist and the educational practitioner employed within the state education system. I illustrate the development in my thinking and practice as an *educational* psychologist from when I began working for a school psychology service, concerned with devising programmes to remediate problems referred, to coming to an understanding about what was *educational* about my practice (pages 58-63). I clarify the impact traditional forms of social science research had on my practice, my growing awareness of the ethical and philosophical concerns this raised in relation to my practice and understanding Living-Theory research (pages 72-78) as a way of resolving the contradictions I experienced.

The narrative in this chapter illustrates how the notion I have developed of Living-Theory praxis enables me as a professional educational practitioner to hold improving practice and theory together with a moral intent and enables me to hold myself to account to ethical standards that improve educational practice.

1.2.2 Clarification of my ontological and social values in living-boundaries (Chapter 3)

Having outlined an argument concerning the notion of Living-Theory praxis as a significant and original contribution to educational knowledge I move to communicate the values that are core to the thesis and my work. I clarify through image, text and multimedia narratives what I mean by ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values.

As I clarify my values in this chapter I offer you an insight into some of the relationships, space and opportunities that constitute my improving practice. The images, videos and texts have been collected and made public with ethical permissions (consistent with BERA¹⁴, BPS¹⁵ and local authority guidance) of those featured. For instance, the APEX Saturday workshop programme is brought to life through figure 8 (page 87) and the accompanying text. I show how it is possible to create a visual narrative that conforms to the various ethical guidelines where the child is anonymous (page 88).

I introduce material I drafted for a book for teachers I co-authored with two educators who have engaged with me through APEX, to provide a narrative of improving practice (pages 93-101). This was intended to communicate influentially to an audience of practitioners. I explained on page 35 the meanings in this thesis are created with you ostensibly and through an

¹⁴ BERA – British Educational Research Association

¹⁵ BPS – British Psychological Society

iterative process. I remind you of this on page 92 as I introduce the text-based narrative.

I keep the connection of the thesis as a doctoral submission and the narrative thread of improving practice in the section on multimedia narratives beginning on page 101. As multimedia narratives to communicate energy-flowing values are not common I give three narratives. In the third, where I show myself communicating my embodied values, I give the story behind the narrative (pages 107-111). As a Living-Theory researcher I expect to show the progress of my praxis through action-reflection cycles and provide evidence of the authenticity of my improving practice (Habermas, 1976).

The narrative where I ostensibly and iteratively communicate my values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society introduces you again to the members of the Improving Practice Conversation Café (pages 113-117). This is an important aspect of my practice, developing APEX, by contributing to the development of a supportive culture through co-learning with local authority staff.

1.2.3 The evolution of my living-educational-theory praxis (Chapter 4)

After introducing the notion of Living-Educational-Theory praxis and communicating my ontological and social values I bring the two together to describe and explain my living-theory praxis through its evolution in living-boundaries. I particularly attend to clarifying the living-boundaries within which I work that provide possibilities for educators and learners to co-create and offer as gifts; talents, expertise, and knowledge of the world, knowledge of themselves and knowledge of themselves in and of the world.

I provide a diagrammatic (figure 14, page 123) overview of the framework I developed to help me keep a connection between activity and improving practice. I then use key questions that emerged during the research to provide a narrative path of improving practice through the cycles of action-reflection and the process of evolving my living-theory praxis. As the narrative progresses I describe and explain for instance, the programme of Saturday workshops (pages 127-129), collaborative, creative enquiries and passion-led learning opportunities (pages 129-141), and the Masters programme (page 132-140). Through image and video I give you a window into the local worlds of practice and the educational influence my improving practice has had in the learning of children and young people that text alone could not communicate. This extends the ostensive, iterative clarification of my values begun in Chapter 2 (pages 51-85) and the development of forms of monitoring and evaluation, which are ethical, generative and transformational, a subject I revisit in Chapter 6 (pages 191-221).

1.2.4 The development of inclusive gifted and talented education from an educational perspective. (Chapter 5)

In researching to improve my contribution to the quality of the educational experience of each learner and to the realisation of the vision of my

employers, I have developed a notion of *inclusive* gifted and talented education developed from an *educational* perspective. In this chapter I offer an argument for what I believe is an original and significant contribution to the field of gifted and talented education arising through the evolution of my living-theory praxis.

In this chapter the narration of improving practice is organised through the nature of the relationships, space and opportunities that constitute my practice rather than through a chronology of questions and action-reflection cycles of my evolving living-theory praxis, which was the subject of Chapter 4 (pages 119- 154). As I describe the activities that constitute my practice I give explanations of how they have contributed to the development of inclusive gifted and talented relationships, space, opportunities and a supportive culture from an educational perspective. The explanations are still values-based contextualised by the field of gifted and talented education, the impositions and possibilities offered by the Government's National Gifted and Talented Strategy and the Local Authority policy on high ability learning.

1.2.5 A creative use of multimedia narratives in researching the meanings of values in living-boundaries and developing generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability (Chapter 6)

I have so far taken as a given, that in creating data as evidence that communicates meanings of energy-flowing values, I enhance my educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others and of social formations. In this chapter I offer an argument to support this assertion. I show and explain the creative use I have made of multimedia narrative to clarify, understand, evaluate, account for and communicate the meanings of my values as they emerge in my enquiry within living-boundaries. I show the contribution multimedia narratives make to the generative and transformational influence of Living-Theory praxis.

In this chapter I connect the narrative thread of my practice concerned with regional and national relationships and with those locally (pages 193-208) to illustrate the creative use I have made of multimedia narrative to improve practice and develop generative and transformational forms of evaluating and accounting for what I do.

1.2.6 Living-Theory TASC: A relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis (Chapter 7)

As I have evolved my living-theory praxis, I have developed my understanding of the research approach I have employed. This approach I call Living-Theory TASC. I offer, what I believe, to be a reasonable and reasoned description and explanation of how this approach enables me to hold the systematic and organic nature of my educational research together coherently. This takes me back to the limitations of many approaches to educational research I introduce in Chapter 2 and offers a response that I

hope will be of use to others seeking to contribute to improving the educational experience of themselves and other learners.

In this Chapter I keep the narrative thread of improving practice weaving through my explanation of my contribution to knowledge beginning with the influential voice of Joy Mounter's pupils, who have offered generative and transformational educational challenge to me and other educators. In similar vein I bring in the voices of Andrew Henon and other members of the CPD group who continue to be my test stones to improve my living-theory praxis.

1.2.7 What have I learned and what now? (Chapter 8)

To bring this particular learning journey to a conclusion I look back from where I have arrived into the grey mists of the learning adventure this journey has formed but a part of, to understand a little more of what I have learned. However, this is not an end. As I communicate to and with you and myself, I am evolving my living-theory praxis in new contexts as my pebble on the pile to help humanity flourish.

1.3 Postscript

In this first chapter I have set the scene of the multimedia narrative that constitutes my living-theory by introducing the context of the thesis and research and clarified some of the particular language used. I have also described the evaluative criteria and structure of the thesis and pointed to the narrative thread of improving practice that runs throughout. In the next chapter I detail the notion of Living-Theory praxis and the contribution it makes to educational knowledge.

Before leaving this introduction I would like to remind you of the qualities of humanity that I wish to communicate throughout this thesis such as warmth, love, and humour that carries a flow of energy, which is life-affirming and life-enhancing and should be at the core of all that is educational. There is something about humour that can evoke a healthy physical and psychological sense of well-being flowing with life-affirming energy. Bateson (1952) in his paper, 'The Position of Humor in Human Communication', noted:

'One of the rather curious things about *homo sapiens* is laughter, one of the three common convulsive behaviours of people in daily life, the others being grief and orgasm.' (p.2)

There is a quality of humour that communicates what I have been trying to say about the contribution I want to make to educational knowledge that places it beyond individual endeavour to connect with the social, cultural and historical contexts within which I make sense of my life as worth living. This quiz, wrongly attributed to Shultz as his philosophy on numerous websites, communicates with a pleasure, a humour and humanity, which I believe educators should keep closely connected to, to keep from 'losing the

plot'. Unfortunately for reasons of copyright I was not able to include pictures of Charlie Brown and Snoopy but if your imagination does not suffice you can find many illustrated examples on the web.

You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just read straight through, and you'll get the point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of Miss America.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with!

The lesson: The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care.



Pass this on to the people who have made a difference in your life!

I would like to keep this sense of pleasure and the connection with the description of the activities that constitute my practice with what is important in my life as I launch into the chapter on Living-Educational-Theory praxis.