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## **Worldwide Perspectives on Action Research in Education**

Ernie Stringer, Bob Dick and Jack Whitehead

“Globalization: The process of making links between the local, social and global.”

### **Introduction: Globalization and Action Research**

The current era may be characterized as one in which disparities between the rich and poor continue to increase, despite the continued attempts to “close the gap” through remedial actions instituted by government programs and interventions. In education, as in other spheres of social life, the gap between the educational attainment of those from upper and lower socio-economic groups continues, despite significant levels of funding directed to special programs and services over an extended period.

Reviews by Sarason (1990) and Cole (2010) reveal that lack of significant progress in lessening this gap over a forty-year period can be attributed to the inability of educational systems to think past established practices of organization, curriculum and pedagogy. This echoes Foucault’s (1972) analysis of institutional life in which he attributes lack of progress on this issue to the ability of a professional and organizational elite to control the systems of knowledge – or discourses - framing and maintaining ordinary, commonly accepted practices and procedures. Oppressive systems of domination and control, Foucault suggests, are maintained not by autocratic action, though this sometimes appears true, but by the unconsciously accepted, routine practices people use in their professional and occupational lives. These mechanisms are magnified in the current era, where educational life is often framed according to the narratives of corporate life and market forces, and scientific knowledge is demonized or disregarded by politicians and the media (Denzin and Giardina 2018).

In the contemporary world, technology creates instant access to information and communication, and social life is increasingly impacted by global economic forces. Within the university, as in other educational environments, teaching and research are progressively dominated by centralized compliance and accountability processes, generating mechanized and technicized procedures that threaten the very lifeblood of the university – the academic freedom to produce knowledge that directly speaks to the needs of the people. As Denzin and Giardini (2018) suggest the need to “.. be more forceful in producing research that not only matters in the abstract, ephemeral sense of *wanting* to contribute to social justice and social change, but matters in concrete and productive ways for a refashioned [research] to take effect.” (p. 2)

This chapter seeks to present interpretations of ways that action research can provide the means for such an enterprise. Ernie Stringer uses a developmental framework to describes how levels of participatory action research from the personal to the global were used as the basis for instituting the development of a national educational policy in East Timor. Bob Dick provides insight into the growth of action research within a wide range of international contexts, in the process revealing the how educational action research has influenced the continual development of the field. Jack Whitehead extends our understanding of the ways in which a focus on lived experience enriches processes of inquiry, demystifying the disembodied politics often involved and empowering participants to contribute to the global flourishing of humanity.

### **Action Research as Developmental Process (Ernie Stringer)**

A well-founded local action research process holds within it the potential to be more effective and sustainable by making links with the organizational structures of wider social and global institutions. Action research may therefore be seen as a developmental process that can spiral out from a single locality to develop relationships with broader social groups or institutions providing the possibility of taking action at regional, national or international levels. The processes of development inherent in these movements therefore often require practitioners and workers to engage in sustained work over time and to develop the skills to take action at these levels.

Quick fix programs, so common in today's world often fail to provide the continuing processes of change and development required to deal effectively with issues deeply embedded in the fabric of organization and social life. Kelly and Westoby (2018) present development in terms of spheres of activity, each nested within the other, providing the means to sustain the principles involved in participatory work and the carefully articulated practices that attain the desired outcomes of the process. Their formulation suggests the following basic framework of actions:

- Implicate method for positioning self within the context
- Micro method for building relationships between people
- Mezzo method for strengthening group activities
- Macro method for establishing effective organizations
- Meta method for making local, social and global linkages

The implication of this practice framework is that developmental work is not just an organizational matter, but requires participants to acquire the skills and knowledge enabling them to maintain the principles inherent in participatory processes.

Inherent in participatory action research, therefore, is the need to engage it in thoughtful, reflective and systematic processes of investigation and action. The many and varied frameworks of the family of processes that fit within the compass of what we term action research largely focus on reiterative cycles of reflection and action that:

- Identify a focus for inquiry – defining a problem or issue to be investigated

- Identify stake-holding groups related to the problem or issue
- Gather information from each of those stake-holding groups
- Reflect on or analyse that information to determine key concepts and perspectives
- Plan steps (actions) to be taken

My own experience has involved learning the many and varied understandings and routines required to facilitate these processes. The following example, though not an adequate representation of the above frameworks provides something of the flavor of the practices involved in working from the personal to the global. Much detail is missing from this account, but is true, as far as I found possible, to both the principles and the movement of participatory practice. It does not include the struggles, mistakes and personal hurt involved in the often-demanding world of social and political engagement, nor the joy and sense of accomplishment revealed in the delight of participants in a successful project. Generally, however, I look back at my history of experience in the field with a sense of satisfaction, not at what I have accomplished personally, but at the feeling that I have participated in something particularly worthwhile.

In the earlier part of this century I was asked to work in East Timor at a time when the nation had gained independence from the colonial rule of Indonesia. Being particularly busy at the time with a demanding publishing schedule I initially refused the request, but was brought up sharply by one of my sons who was stationed in that emerging nation. “Dad!” he exclaimed in exasperation. “They’re trying to build a new nation. They need people like you!!”

Caught in a net of my own making I phoned the UNICEF office in East Timor and accepted the task offered, a six weeks project to identify ways of engaging local communities in the re-building of their local schools. This had become necessary due to the rather brutal actions of the departing Indonesian military that had destroyed many of the schools, and the departure of Indonesian nationals who comprised a large proportion of teaching and administrative staff.

A small team comprised of myself and 2-3 local people engaged in a series of exploratory workshops in a small, diverse sample of schools across the nation under the auspice of UNICEF and the national education authority – the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports (MEYAS). This was supervised by a national committee derived from the education authorities, UNICEF, the Catholic Church, the World Bank and other key stake-holding entities. In the process I was careful to engage in regular consultation and feedback sessions with senior administrators within UNICEF, the education Ministry and other members of the supervising committee.

Workshops in each of the sample schools were engaged as participatory action research with parents, principals, teachers and community leaders exploring basic questions related to the development of their school:

- What do we want for the education of the children in the community?
- What should the government provide?
- What can we do to assist?

The school plans resulting from these workshops provided the material from which a Policy Proposal Report was presented to the Ministry. The report provided a rich body of information, particularly about the role that parents and community leaders could play in re-building local schools. A Report had been approved by the supervising committee and enthusiastically endorsed by the Ministry, the Director General speaking in glowing terms of the positive feedback he had received from schools involved in this initial process.

As a result I was asked to facilitate the implementation of the plan and made regular extended visits to East Timor over the next two years returning to assist in the development of local, regional and national plans for the reconstruction of local schools across the nation.

Initial implementation of the plan included:

- The assignment of the Deputy Director of the Ministry to supervise its implementation
- Identification of a sample of schools to participate in a Pilot Project in which action research processes were used to develop local plans
- A review of Pilot schools to assess the extent of local engagement

This aspect of the project was almost immediately successful, five of the six schools indicating they had initiated a range of meaningful projects and the remaining school indicating they had been unable to effectively establish a plan, but requesting support to do so. Local members of the national team supporting these initiatives were enthusiastic about the process, not only because of the positive outcomes, but because of the process used. “This is so *democratic!*” one exclaimed delightedly as we left a school on our way back to our base in Dili.

The Ministry itself was equally delighted and indicated to regional superintendents that they should assign three experienced principals in each office to supervise the implementation of the Plan on a national scale. In the following year both superintendents and the assigned principals were engaged in workshops to enable them to understand and, in the case of the principals, to practice the skills required in enacting the plan. A national team was formed to support the work of the regional teams, and regular review and planning workshops provided the means to assess projects and to work through problems that some were experiencing.

A review of the outcomes of this and other projects indicated that of the four projects initiated by the Ministry in conjunction with UNICEF the Parent Participation project had clearly made the most impact. Parent projects differed according to the needs and conditions of local schools, but included rebuilding destroyed classrooms, repairing or constructing seats and desks, providing water and sanitary services to the school, and constructing teaching materials. Since funds in this poor, newly emerging nation were very restricted, people in their communities either made use of local resources, or found ways of raising funds – a school garden to producing vegetables to sell with other home made edibles at the local market; and a fish farm for the same purpose.

In all of this it was most edifying to visit the schools for review sessions and to see the delight and sense of accomplishment in the people as they demonstrated the outcomes of their efforts. The word “empowerment” evident in their excitement and enthusiasm. The same was true of regional Ministry review and planning workshops facilitated by the national team. The sustainable organizational processes now embedded in regional Ministry offices is best presented from my field notes at the final workshop before I finished my contract:

*And so it comes down to this, hunched dispiritedly over my computer, the hiss of the computer playing counterpart to the hot buzz of three small fans that had, over the past three days, fed a warm jet of air over the people that happened to be sitting directly beneath them in the large unenclosed meeting area. Testament of the heat and humidity was the red heat rash in my arm pits, and my continuous trips to the water bottle to replenish depleted body fluids.*

*But in all that I sit here with a soft warm glow inside me, thinking quietly of what I have seen these past days. Of men, mainly men in this very traditional patriarchy, and a few women, engaged in wonderfully soulful work, the work of their nation. Working with a will, with intensity and passion, oblivious to the hardness of their surrounding, engaged so competently in their work. My notes record the technical details:*

*“The district coordinators present their reports, so rich and fully detailed, for the most part, but each with its distinctive flavor and some revealing deficiencies in their planning. But the feedback they get from their colleagues is informative and productive, challenging each other to articulate well targeted objectives and strategies, commenting directly on weaknesses, and providing comment and counsel that provides the means to repair weaknesses and strengthen planned processes.”*

*And although I have been only one of many to contribute to this project, I can see so much that derives from my work, in both the structures and processes of their work. I cannot help the small glow of satisfaction that sits quietly within me, a glow fanned to warmth by the non-verbals that come to me from the people themselves.*

*And the fact is that I have actually done little more than plan this workshop with them, then observe as they have rolled it out! I have become redundant, in a most direct way, and sit in awe at the way they continue to evolve, creating complex plans, solving significant problems with creative ease, and focusing, always focusing, with such intensity that I wonder how they sustain it. And this intensity they direct not only at the work in front of them, but at each other as they demand, just demand through their feedback, that the work be of the highest quality, both through their words and their body language. They are very direct. “That’s not good enough. There is not enough detail to provide guidance for the process. There is no link between the objectives and the strategies. By what means are you going to attain those outcomes with the people with whom you work?” And demand those in the spotlight provide answers; real, practical answers, not cover stories. And if these are not forthcoming, to switch tracks and say something like “Would it work if you...”*

*and provide a suggestion, one picking up from another, with “Or could you....”. Direct, demanding, but nurturing, all at once. I love the way they work together. What a group, what a team, what a cadre, since they have the air of a group of people on a mission. What wonderful people to work with.*

This interpretation of a project that used action research processes as a means for framing and implementing national policy in a developing nation illustrates the potential of action research. Commencing with conversations with senior officials in the Ministry and UNICEF, workshops within a diverse sample of locations provided the material from which pilot projects were instituted. The success and enthusiasm thus generated provided the impetus for the national authority to institute developmental processes in a broader sample of schools at the regional level. These were directed by District Superintendents who had collectively been informed of activities emerging from the initial pilot and consulted about delivery in their regions. At each phase the participatory processes of inquiry provided the means to incorporate the perspectives and agendas of the different stake-holding groups, thus linking the implicate, micro, mezza, macro and meta levels of development. These provided the means of building the capacities of people to sustain the outcomes of the initial project into then national system of education, something that was acknowledged by the Director General of the Ministry in the final meeting of the Supervising Committee.

### **The Continual Influence of Educational Action Research (Bob Dick)**

The 1960s and early 1970s saw what could have become a blossoming of more democratic workplaces and classrooms. The ferment of the times arose from a realisation that the world was changing rapidly, and the change was escalating. In such a world, as Burns and Stalker (1961) showed, a loosening of bureaucratic approaches was seen as desirable. Otherwise, organisations were less able to respond to their increasingly turbulent environment. Wilfred Carr (2006) explains that action research, too, experienced a resurgence at that time.

Even though the rate of change has continued to increase since then, the blossoming democracy was short-lived. The loosening of control, with its threat of empowering the masses, generated a backlash. Nancy McLean (2017) has documented how global elites set out to regain their influence. They largely succeeded. Around the world, governments took their economies rightward, stifling many of the emerging initiatives. The use of action research receded, too, in many settings. It was mostly within education, in the schools and higher education institutions, that it was kept alive.

Viewed from today’s perspective, some of the educational action research of the time seems more like traditional research. Sagor (e.g. 2005) describes action research that could count almost as quasi-experiment. But the educational action research literature served to keep action research in the eye of enough researchers and practitioners. Again viewed from the present, a surprising amount of classroom action research at the time consisted of teachers improving their own practice without involving their learners in the research. Yet it is fair to assume that they would have regarded the learners as key stakeholders in the learning.

Engaging participants fully can be difficult. Participation isn't all or none. It can vary along a continuum. Some learners may not wish to be engaged, especially if they have been deprived of agency through disempowering processes or structures. There may be some truth in Graham Webb's (1996) assertion that some action researchers are less participative than they would claim. Consistent with much of Chris Argyris's extensive research (e.g. Argyris, 2010) most of us often fall short of our aspirations. We don't always practice what we preach.

In addition, action research with little or no participation will at least encourage reflection and improvement on the part of the educator. That is likely to be better than no action research at all. Further, achieving full participation can be difficult. Some educators may lack the requisite skills. Perhaps the extent of participation can usefully be regarded as a choice instead of being left unaddressed (Hayward, Simpson & Wood, 2004). That said, most educational action research *was* and *is* participative, some more than others. Educators such as Stephen Kemmis, for example, advocate a form of action research that is critical and emancipatory. The 2014 revision of *The action research planner* (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014) is an example.

Now, in a second resurgence reminiscent of the 1960s, the use of action research in education -- and elsewhere too - seems again to be growing. There are still obstacles, as Greenwood and Levin (2006) explain, not least because of a shift in universities from collegialism to managerialism. However, in a web search for action research literature, the field of education is likely to account for more hits from a search engine than would any other comparable field.

Hase and Kenyon (2000) introduced the term heutagogy to education. They saw it as a step beyond andragogy, from learner-*centred* learning to learner-*directed* learning. Heutagogy is part of a wider movement to engage learners more directly in decisions that affect them. Andragogy was contrasted by Knowles (1975) to pedagogy, learning by children. However, there is evidence that andragogy, and perhaps even heutagogy, can apply as well to children as to adults. Chapter 20 of this volume describes two examples of approaches to education that offer high engagement and involvement to learners. One is the *Werkplaats Kindergemeenschap*, the Children's Community Workplace, an elementary and high school in Bilthoven, Holland. The other is a largely self-directed university class.

Influenced by or directly using action research, initiatives such as Student Voice work at school level as well as in the classroom, Cook-Sather (2014) reports a growth in the popularity of such programs. A Student Voice program that one of us is involved in is working over three years to collect information from students at a number of schools that have volunteered to be involved. The information will be fed back to the schools, to assist them to increase student involvement and participation within the classroom. The program also includes workshops to develop skills at engaging students, and Student Action Teams to involve students directly in helping to guide the implementation of Student Voice. Jessie Robertson (2017) describes a similar approach in New Zealand. The aim is to renegotiate the roles of educators and learners.

Action learning and action research had different origins. For much of their life they had almost completely separate literatures. Recognising the similarities, in the 1980s

there were practitioners who used both and regarded them as allied. In the late 1970s, Charles Margerison (1978) argued for using them in combination for management education. He believed that such an approach would engage learners more directly in influencing what they learned, improving the quality of learning. He expressed some dissatisfaction at how rare such approaches were at the time.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt expended some effort in bringing action research and action learning together more officially. She organised a conference in Brisbane in 1990 'Action learning for improved performance' (Wadsworth, 2014). One outcome of that conference was the formation of an organisation, ALARPM: action learning, action research and process management. This name reflected the three themes of the conference and the organisation. (The organisation is now ALARA: Action Learning Action Research Association.)

Subsequently Zuber-Skerritt (2011) coined the label PALAR — participatory action learning and action research — to refer to an approach that integrated both. In that book Zuber-Skerritt explicitly applied PALAR to educational leadership. In the same year, Judith Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt (2011) applied PALAR to counteracting educational disadvantage in a Samoan community in Logan, south from Brisbane. Lesley Wood has used PALAR in South Africa for community education and engagement (Wood, 2016) and within the university to encourage critical reflection (Wood et al., 2015).

Richard Teare, a colleague of Zuber-Skerritt, used similar approaches when he set up GULL, the Global University of Lifelong Learning. GULL pioneers action-learning-based educational and developmental initiatives in many parts of the developing world (Zuber-Skerritt and Teare, 2013).

In the mid 1990s the University of South Australia (UniSA) marketed a PhD program in Singapore. Candidates were encouraged to use action research as their methodology. One group of four candidates, co-supervised by Alan Davies and Bob Dick, did all use action research as their research approach. They worked in very different subject areas: introducing action learning to an organisation; installing business continuity processes in an international bank; improving computer-aided design; and nurse education. Despite these differences they and their supervisors worked as a team, supporting one another. All communications were shared between all candidates and supervisors.

The combination of action research and action learning served its purpose well. The four candidates were the first four of all of the UniSA candidates to graduate. They completed their research successfully in under four years. This was done while they continued to work full time in their usual demanding managerial positions (Sankaran et al., 2006).

Based on this experience, Southern Cross University subsequently established an action research PhD program in Singapore. This work was done in partnership with one of the earlier graduates. It used larger cohorts that also worked as an action learning team. As with the earlier cohort of four, candidates researched their own practice within their present employment. In doing so they improved their practice as managers or professionals, obtained a doctoral qualification, and contributed to their



organisations. The combination of action learning and action research was instrumental in providing the multiple outcomes. In addition, useful cross-fertilisation occurred because of the different content areas of the PhDs.

Another approach informed by action learning and action research is work integrated learning, WIL. Joe Raelin (2016), a university educator and one of the key authors of WIL, uses and writes about a variety of action research approaches. WIL moves learning out of the classroom and into the workplace. The Australian Department of Education and Training prepared a research report (Billett et al., 2015) on learning that was fully work-integrated, or supported by other activities. The report endorsed work-based learning as a suitable approach, citing the contribution to individual, workplace and workforce goals. Similar motivations underpin the international approach to learning and development known as 70:20:10 (Wilson et al., 2016). This approach assumes that 70:20:10 is a desirable ratio of challenging assignments (70 per cent) to developmental relationships (20 per cent) to formal coursework and training (10 per cent).

### **The Power of Living Theory.** (Jack Whitehead)

My worldwide perspective on action research in education, began its evolution in 1976, as a lecturer in education at the University of Bath, in coordinating a local curriculum development funded by The Schools Council in the UK. In the project I worked and researched with 6 secondary school teachers to improve learning with 11-14 year olds in their mixed ability science groups. I produced an evaluation report (Whitehead 1976a) in which I explained the educational influences in learning of the participants in terms of academic models of evaluation, change in the teaching learning process from formal instructions to informal instructions to discovery learning and to inquiry learning, as a synthesis of four models of innovation and as a new view of the curriculum. On submitting the report to the teachers, for validation, I was surprised when they responded that they could understand the academic models I had used to explain their educational influences in learning, but they could not see themselves in the report. Immediately this point was raised I could see what I had done. I had eliminated the voices and explanations of the teachers by using conceptual models from the academic literature. The teachers asked me to go back to the data I had collected, with the pupils and teachers and produce a report in which they could see themselves and their pupils.

I went back to the report and working with two of my postgraduate teacher education students, Paul Hunt and Aaron Evans, I produced a very different report (Whitehead, 1976b). The teachers all agreed that this was a valid explanation of their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of their pupils. The introduction to the report states:

The report begins with statements from teachers in mixed ability science lessons, of their problems and possible solutions. These problems included the improvement of relations between teachers and pupils and the organisation of resources for enquiry learning. In response to these problems, the network of in-service support, described in section 4, was created. This network involved a Resource Collection and Evaluation

Service from Bath University and financial assistance from Wiltshire L.E.A. and The Schools Council.

A central focus in the report is the process of self evaluation, by the teachers, of the relationship between what they intended to do and what they achieved in practice. The teachers were assisted, in this process of evaluation, by video tapes of their classroom practice and interview data on their own intentions and their pupils' responses. This information was provided by the Science Centre of Bath University. You will see that improvements in learning occurred through the creative and critical powers of individual teachers and a high degree of cooperative activity.

This was my first explication of the use of action-reflection cycles in enquiries of the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' It emerged from a participatory process of cooperative activity and an analysis of data. I continue to use this action-reflection cycle, as a distinguishing quality of my present worldwide perspective of action research. It involves expressing problems or concerns when values are not being lived as fully as possible; imagining possible ways of improving practice and creating an action plan; acting and gathering data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the actions, evaluating the effectiveness of the actions, modify concerns or problems and actions in the light of the evaluations; producing an evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning.

My perspective of action research in education evolved from the above local curriculum development project through my participation in the first, second, third and seventh World Congresses of the Action Learning Action Research Association, in Brisbane, Bath and Gröningen. In the first Congress in 1990 I was influenced by Colin Henry's evaluation 'If Action Research Were Tennis', in which he stresses the importance of making explicit the principles that distinguished the research inquiries as action research. My engagement with issues of globalisation as a worldwide phenomena affecting action research began with Robin McTaggart's analysis of economic rationality in the second Congress in 1992:

Nevertheless, the new 'economic rationalism' is a worldwide phenomena which 'guides' not only the conduct of transnational corporations, but governments and their agencies as well. It does so with increasing efficacy and pervasiveness. I use the term 'guides' here in quotes to make a particular point. Economic rationalism is not merely a term which suggests the primacy of economic values. It expresses commitment to those values in order to serve particular sets of interests ahead of others. Furthermore, it disguises that commitment in a discourse of 'economic necessity' defined by its economic models. We have moved beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were economic ones (de-valuation) to a situation where moral questions are denied completely (de-moralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability (as if greed had nothing to do with it). Broudy (1981) has described 'de-valuation' and de-moralization' in the following way:

De-valuation refers to diminishing or denying the relevance of all but one type of value to an issue; de-moralization denies the relevance of moral questions. The reduction of all values – intellectual, civic,

health, among others – to a money value would be an example of devaluation; the slogan ‘business’ is business’ is an example of demoralization (Broudy, 1981: 99) (McTaggart, 1992, p. 50).

In 1994 I helped to organise the third Congress on the ‘Theme of Accounting for Ourselves’ at the University of Bath, in the UK. The theme of accounting for ourselves was specifically focused on the responsibility of action researchers in education to produce and share evidence-based explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influenced practice and understandings. I call such explanations, living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1989). The global influence of this idea in a worldwide perspective on action research in education, can be seen in the doctoral theses at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>

In relation to this perspective I want to highlight the DBA program at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht and the pedagogical action learning approach that was developed there by Professor Hugo Letiche and his students. The topics of two recently awarded doctorates will serve to highlight the global perspectives of these researchers. The first is Anne Keizer-Remmer’s (2017) thesis on ‘Underneath The Surface Of Cosmopolitanism: Searching For Cosmpolitanism in Higher Education’. The second is Ann Mannen’s (2018) thesis on the ‘Inclusive Internationalisation of Higher Education’.

The evolution of my perspective has also been influenced by technological advances in visual and digital data collection.

In 1972 I was the Head of Science at Erkenwald Comprehensive School in Barking, London. The inspectorate provided me with a video camera and recording equipment and asked me to explore its educational potential. The first thing I did was to turn the camera on myself and video-tape a lesson in which I believed that I had established enquiry learning with my pupils. On viewing the video-tape I was shocked to experience myself as a ‘living contradiction’ in the sense of holding together the belief that I had established enquiry learning with my pupils in the sense that they were asking questions to which I was responding, and seeing that I was actually giving the pupils the questions to ask. This experience of seeing myself, my ‘I’, as a living contradiction in my question, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ continues to have a profound influence in my perspective. The main logic of Western Academies is influenced by Aristotlean logic which explicitly eliminates contradictions from theories and claims that everything is either A or not-A with the Law of the Excluded Middle. Given my experience in my action learning and action research, that I exist as a living contradiction, I needed a logic that could embrace contradiction in my explanation of educational influences in learning. I turned to the dialectical logic of Ilyenkov (1977) and used this in my own doctorate (Whitehead, 1999).

Whilst still using insights from propositional and dialectical theories in the evolution of my perspective I could see from video-tapes of workshops that I needed a living logic to explain educational influences in learning as I developed an inclusional

awareness of existing within space and boundaries that are connective, reflexive and co-creative. This living logic of inclusional awareness (Whitehead & Rayner, 2006) was accompanied by the recognition that my explanatory principles of educational influence included energy-flowing, ontological and relational values as explanatory principles. My perspective evolved with the help of Vasilyuk's (1991, pp 63-64) insight from his 'energy paradigm' that energy is expressed in everything we do, but that the relationship between energy and values, energy and meaning and energy and motivation is only weakly understood.

In developing research techniques to clarify meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values, I used a process of 'empathetic resonance' with digital visual data from educational practices. This use of digital visual data was presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress. The multi-media presentation (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2006a) can be compared with the published printed text-based version, published in the Congress proceedings (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2006b) to understand what is being lost when printed text is the sole medium of communication for embodied expressions of meaning.

In developing my worldwide perspective on action research in education, I want to acknowledge the importance of de Sousa Santos' (2014) ideas. In my review of these ideas (Whitehead 2016) on the abyssal line, subaltern insurgent cosmopolitanism, epistemicide, ecology of knowledges and intercultural translation, I explain their influence in the evolution and transformation of my own living-educational-theory, and in my exploration of the implications of Santos' ideas for Living Theory research as a social movement.

In developing this perspective I want to draw attention to Inoue's (2015) arguments for bringing Eastern epistemological traditions into this perspective:

There are many different ways of defining mindfulness, but for the purpose of this book, mindfulness is best captured as a state of mind that accepts and accommodates multiple and seemingly conflicting perspectives, beliefs and assumptions. In Eastern epistemological traditions, it is considered to be a path to develop a deep awareness of the complexity of reality as well as what your mind is up to in the complexity. Mindfulness rejects a rigid persistence to only one perspective or belief system that narrowly confines your mind. It is characterized by a mental dispassion that is open and detached from one particular value system. It allows you to see the world from diverse perspectives and critically examine your actions and assumptions... (p.12)

I also want to draw attention to the sustained commitment Caitriona McDonagh, Mairin Glenn, Bernie Sullivan and Mary Roche, who since receiving their living-theory doctorates in 2006-7 have helped to form the Network Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI). Their latest publication on 'Learning Communities in Educational Partnerships' stresses the importance of action research as transformation (Glenn et al, 2017).

In conclusion I want to emphasise the importance of Mary Hawkesworth's (2016) ideas on embodied power and demystifying disembodied politics. Hawkesworth

explains why pervasive practices of racialization and gendering remain unrecognized and unstudied in the context of mainstream political science. Hawkesworth suggests that certain disciplinary assumptions about the nature of politics and the requirements of scientific study of the political world have rendered embodied power beyond the threshold of visibility:

Indeed, processes of racialization and gendering developed over the past five centuries under the auspices of “science” have been embedded in law, custom, accredited knowledge and diverse social practices, lending coherences to forms of unknowing that continue to haunt political science in particular and public life more generally. (p. 5).

In the 10 years of publication of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (<http://ejolts.net/about>) the embodied power of practitioner-researchers has been included through multi-media texts that have clarified and communicated the embodied expressions of ontological values that action researchers have used to give their lives meaning and purpose. These values have been used as explanatory principles in explanation of educational influences. The gathering together of action researchers in a global social movement that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity is being informed by the worldwide perspective of action research in education discussed above. I am suggesting that we can strengthen the educational influences in learning of such a global movement of action researchers through working and researching co-operatively with Living Theory as a Way of Life (Whitehead, 2018).

### **Conclusion: Act Locally, Think Globally**

Contributions to this chapter reveal the extent to which action research continues to contribute to the development of more effective and meaningful educational systems that operate for the good of the people they serve. In a global context dominated by increasingly centralized and disempowering political and economic forces, action research provides the means for teachers, administrators, parents and community groups to work within their classrooms, schools and educational systems in ways that truly benefit students and their families, communities and nations. Ultimately, participatory action research provides the means to work with individuals and groups, not just for their individual benefit, but to build civil society, to engender a more humane democracy, and to provide the means to live in a more sustainable world.

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