

Where do we go from here in contributing to 'The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?'

Jackie Delong, Jack Whitehead and Marie Huxtable



Figure 1 Jack and Jackie getting the workshop underway

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

Abstract:

The workshop brought together researchers who are engaged in action learning/action research inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing and live, as fully as possible, my values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity?' Participants comprised researchers physically present in the room, those present through SKYPE and those who have a virtual presence in the form of their living-posters at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage020617.pdf>

This workshop focused on living-theory accounts created by educational practitioner researchers, including those engaging as AL/AR practitioners, which are contributing to a legacy for transforming social change. The living-theories used in the workshop included those accredited for doctoral degrees in different universities around the world.

The workshop demonstrated the communicative power of multi-media narratives with digital visual data to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Ideas, critically and creatively engaged with included current social theories such as de Sousa Santos' (2014) ideas on 'epistemicide'. These ideas were used to show how Western academic reasoning and epistemology can be understood and transcended in the generation of the living-educational-theories of individuals, grounded in their experiences and contexts.

Purpose of workshop:

To contribute to the evolution of global, AR/AL research communities of practitioner-researchers, who are creating and sharing, as living-theories, their evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning.

What we hoped participants might learn:

1. The meaning of a living-educational-theory and Living Theory research in AL/AR in learning where do we go from

here in contributing to *'The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?'*

2. How to integrate digital visual data into an explanation of educational influence in learning
3. How to strengthen the validity of an explanation grounded in personal experience through the use of a validation group that uses the mutual rational control of critical discussion.
4. How to integrate insights from social theories and other disciplines in the generation and sharing of a living-educational-theory.

Activities

1. We introduced the idea that individuals can generate their living-educational-theories as explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence their practice and understandings. Participants were also introduced to the resources they could access from <http://www.actionresearch.net>.
2. Participants then discussed in pairs their experiences and contexts in which they are seeking to live their relational and ontological values as fully as possible. These are the values which give their lives meaning and purpose.
3. Participants were then taken through a Living Theory research process in which they describe what they would like to improve, produce an action plan and explain the data they will need to collect to make an evidence-based judgement on their effectiveness.

Jackie introduced a process she has used to create her own living-theory:

- I. Begin with values: What are the values that I hold that give meaning to my life? Write a story about

something about which I care deeply: what are the values (a few core values) evident in the story?

- II. From the general, 'How can I improve my practice?' I move on to focus: What area of my practice would I like to improve? Select an area of my practice that is doable in the time and with the resources that I have.
- III. Begin to plan by imagining a way forward. What steps might I take to address the area for improvement?
- IV. What actions will I take in my plan to improve? How can I break down the steps into specific actions in a timeline?
- V. What means will I use to collect data to show improvement? What means of record-keeping will I use? Some options include: daily journal, videotaping, still photos, observation, meeting agendas/minutes.
- VI. Who will be my critical friend (s) and join me in a culture of inquiry? Who will give me critical, kindly and supportive responses to the writing of my research and claims to know?
- VII. How will I ensure that my actions are ethical? What permissions are needed to ensure that no harm is done, that credit is recognized and that relationships are maintained?
- VIII. What process will I use to analyze the data that I have collected? While some of this will emerge as I go along, what might be some approaches to seeing the learning/improvement in the data?
- IX. How have I used my values as explanatory principles to explain my influence on myself, on others and on social formations? How do I move from description to explanation to share the nature of my influence, recognizing that I am a 'living contradiction'?

- X. Once I have written up my embodied knowledge, who will be members of my validation group? How will I use Habermas' criteria of authenticity, comprehensibility, socio-historical context and truthfulness in my validation group to strengthen my account?
 - XI. How will I be accountable for my claims to know in a public forum? Where will I share my account to hold myself accountable for my claims to know?
4. Virtual participants were brought into the workshop through their living-posters and living-theories in web-based resources and there was time to bring five into the workshop via SKYPE.



Figure 2a SKYPE participants feeling the pleasure when connection is made with the participants in Vermont.

From left to right:

Cathy Griffin and Krystam Damm from the Bluewater Action Research Network (BARN) in Canada:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/barn020617.pdf>

Swaroop Rawal, in India:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/swaroop250518.pdf>



Figure 2b SKYPE participants feeling the pleasure when connection is made with the participants in Vermont.

From left to right:

Bruce Damon in South Africa:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/bruce250518.pdf>

Máirín Glenn in Ireland:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/neari250518.pdf>

To help the SKYPE participants prepare, they were told that by the time they were brought into the workshop through SKYPE, Jack and Jackie would have:

1. Introduced the idea that individuals can generate their living-educational-theories as explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence their practice and understandings.

Shown participants how to access resources
<http://www.actionresearch.net>.

2. Given participants time to begin discussing in pairs their experiences and contexts in which they are seeking to live their relational and ontological values as fully as possible; the values they use to give their lives meaning and purpose.
3. Taken them through an action reflection cycle in which they describe what they would like to improve, produce an action plan, and explain the data they will need to collect to make an evidence-based judgement on their effectiveness.

The connection was then made between the SKYPE group and those in the room in Vermont. As time was so tight each person was asked to prepare a two minute introduction to themselves, their context and work and to give an example of the transformational influence their Living Theory research has had on their life, work and learning, that of others and the social formations locally/nationally/globally. The 14:54 minute video of the SKYPE contributions can be accessed from

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

Then the connection was broken and the participants in Vermont continued with Jack and Jackie to the last phase of the workshop:

4. The web-based resources at <http://www.actionresearch.net> were used to demonstrate the academic legitimacy of living-theories in Universities around the world. We focused on Living Theory doctorates at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> to show how a multi-media narrative can carry the meanings

of embodied values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

The workshop concluded with an invitation to participants to contribute to the evolution of Living Theory research as a social movement by way of, for example, email connections, making public accounts of their living-theories as journal papers and sending their living-posters for adding to the community resource accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/>.

Biographies

Jackie Delong: In my 38 work years, I was a professional educator, teaching at elementary, secondary, university levels, and an administrator of schools and school systems in Ontario, Canada. As a Superintendent of Education, I researched my practice and created my own living-educational-theory doctorate asking the question, 'How do I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools and create my own living-educational-theory?' (Delong, 2002).

Currently, my practice is volunteering my time and expertise as a mentor to others around the world who want to create their living-educational-theories by "loving them into learning" (Campbell, 2011) in a "culture of inquiry" (Delong, 2013). In order to continuously improve my practice, I examine, study and write about those "loving educational relationships" and present at practitioner-researcher conferences. I see myself as a social activist, part of Living Theory research as a social movement (Whitehead, 2009) for social transformation for the flourishing of humanity and as a living global citizen (Potts, 2019).

Jack Whitehead is a Living Educational Theorist based in the UK. Previously at the University of Bath, he is now a Visiting Professor at the University of Cumbria, UK and at Ningxia Teachers University in Ningxia, China. He originated the idea that individuals could create their own explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which their

enquiries are located, as their living-educational-theories. He pioneered the use of digital, multi-media narratives for clarifying and evolving the meanings of the expression of embodied values in explanations of educational influence, in research degrees. The resources on his web-site <http://www.actionresearch.net> are an international resource for action researchers who are generating their own living-theories with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity from enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

Marie Huxtable practiced as an Educational Psychologist in English Local Authorities where she developed and implemented policy to improve educational experiences for school children and educators to develop aspirations and the confidence and competences to realise them in their own learning and in other peoples' learning. Her concerns are that: Practice, theory and research appear to lose connection with the purpose of education; Theory and practice develop independently, and without explanation or evaluation related to values of education; Those involved with education appeared to be vying with each other to exert their hegemony over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision. In 2012 she was awarded her Ph.D. for her thesis, 'How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?' She is currently a visiting research fellow with the University of Cumbria and continues to support and spread Living Theory research and living-educational-theories in various local and global contexts.