

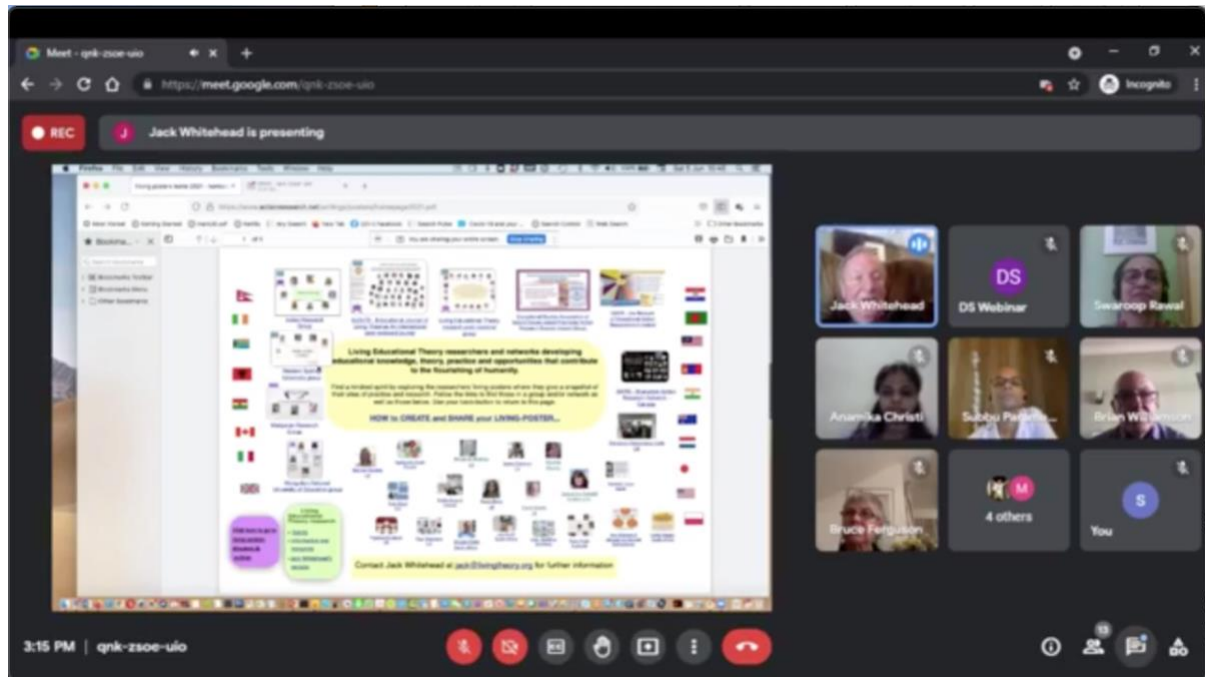
## Webinar organized by Sardar Patel University

'Living Educational Theory Research and the teacher as a professional'

Keynote by Dr. Jack Whitehead

June 5, 2021

10:30- 11:00 AM (BST)



Video of 18 minute introduction from Jack Whitehead accessible from:

<https://youtu.be/q3IDIIImRiE>

### Abstract

The presentation will focus on a Living Educational Theory Research approach to the professional development of teachers which can help to improve the quality of educational practice. It will include an explanation of what constitutes an individual's living-educational-theory that involves learning with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

The Living Educational Theory Research approach (Whitehead, 2018) for professional development is a values-based, near-to-practice, educational research methodology. This keynote is intended for educational practitioners working in diverse fields of professional practice and cultural contexts who ask research questions such as:

- How do I improve my practice?
- How do I improve this process of education here and now?
- What educational influence am I having in my own learning, in the learning of other people, and in the learning of the organisation or community that I am part of?

Following definitions of 'being professional' and 'being a professional'; 'Living Educational Theory Research and a living-educational theory'; the meanings of values and using values as

explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning, participants will be introduced to the data archive at <http://www.actionresearch.net> to help with the generation of an evidence-based explanation of how a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development is contributing to enhancing the flow of values of human flourishing. The evidence includes the living-educational-theories of researchers at Sardar Patel University who are contributing to making the world a better place to be with the values of educational responsibility of citizen-scholars (Harper, et al., 2021)

### **Organisation of the presentation**

This presentation is organised in terms of :

- i) The use of the Chat facility to ask questions, raise issues and share emails.
- ii) Being Professional and Being a Professional.
- iii) living-educational-theories of educators.
- iv) Living Educational Theory Research.
- v) Clarifying meanings of values with digital visual data from educational practice.
- vi) Values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.
- vii) Using the data archive at <http://www.actionresearch.net>. This includes using insights from:
  - a) Papers accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/writing.shtml>
  - b) Living-posters accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf>
  - c) Living Educational Theory Research doctorates accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>
  - d) The archive of the Educational Journal of Living Theories between 2008-2020, accessed from <https://ejolts.net/current>
- viii) Public criticism to enhance validity and rigour

### **Contents of the Presentation**

- i) The use of the Chat facility to ask questions, raise issues and share emails.**

The Covid-19 Pandemic has moved many conferences and other meetings on-line through applications such as ZOOM. Whilst reducing live face-to-face conversations it has stimulated explorations of the potentials of on-line communications. For example, the cost of a face-to-face presentation with registration fees, air-travel and accommodation for me to present at an educational research conference in India would have been in the region of £2000. With a virtual international conference such as AERA 2021 the cost was the £125 pound registration fee. In relation to the 2022 AERA theme of “Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century” (Na’ilah Suad Nasir et al, 2021) an online virtual conference would give greater equitable access to the world’s largest gathering of educational researchers. However, going back to pre-pandemic face-to-face only conferences, with such costs, will act against the principle of equity in relation to opportunities for presentation.

The Chat facility on Webinars usually enables participants to respond to issues and to ask questions as the presentation is taking place. It enables the presenter to appreciate the issues and questions being raised and the opportunity to respond. If participants include their emails it also enables presenters and others to continue to the conversations following the presentation. So, do please use the Chat facility to share your questions, responses and emails. I first addressed the following points ii-vii in my presentation to the 2021 Solstice Conference, as a Visiting Professor at Edge Hill University in the UK.

## **ii) Being a Professional and Being Professional**

In the UK and in many other countries, but not all, being a professional usually involves the meeting of the standards set by a professional body for entrance into a profession. There are no generally accepted standards for continuing professional development. In a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development, a professional has an educational responsibility to make a contribution to their professional knowledgebase, through generating and sharing their living-educational-theory. Being professional can refer to activities outside the standards set by a professional body. It can for example refer to the expression of accepting educational responsibility as a citizen-scholar. This can mean conforming to standards of validity and rigour within an educational inquiry and in generating and sharing a living-educational-theory, without conforming to the standards set by a professional body.

## **iii) living-educational-theories of educators.**

A living-educational-theory is an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence educational practice and explanations of educational influences in learning. You can access more detail on the distinction between a living-educational-theory and Living Educational Theory Research (EJOLTs, 2021). The stress on educational influences in learning is because not all learning is educational. History shows many examples of individuals and cultural influences in social formations that have led to learning that supported crimes against humanity and negated values of human flourishing. Stressing the importance of educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing, is intended to reduce the likelihood of such negations.

## **iv) Living Educational Theory Research.**

Traditional Theories are usually presented as general explanations for phenomena. Explanations for particular instances that fall under the theory are derived from the general conceptual framework in a process of deduction from the general to the particular. In Living Educational Theory Research there is no such process of deduction from the general to the particular. Living-educational-theories are generated by individuals to explain their educational influences in learning. These explanations can include insights from theories in the disciplines of education, but no discipline, taken individually or in any combination, can generate a valid explanation of the educational influences of an individual in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations that influence their practice and explanations. It is possible to conduct a meta-analysis of living-educational-theories to produce useful generalisations for distinguishing Living Educational Theory Research (Williamson & Whitehead, 2021).

**v) Meanings of values in values-laden educational practice.**

In exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my professional, educational practice, it is necessary to clarify and make explicit what counts as an improvement. Claiming that something is an improvement involves a value-judgement. Education, as a values-laden practical activity, also requires the clarification and communication of the values that distinguish learning as educational.

My introduction to the values that distinguish learning as educational was through Richard Peter's (1966) book on Ethics and Education and the British School of Analytic Philosophy. Ethical principles of freedom, justice, respect for person, worth while activities and the consideration of interests, together with the procedural principles of democracy were explicated as ethical principles in education. These meanings were clarified through lexical definitions. That is, the meanings of the value-words were clarified with other words. For me, the values in my educational practice are what constitutes the learning in my educational practice as 'educational'. The meanings of my values are not clarified solely through the value-words I use, such as freedom, justice and love. The meanings are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice. They are embodied expressions in what I do in my educational practice. I usually use digital visual data from my practice, over time and interaction with others, to communicate the meanings of my embodied values as they are clarified in the course of their emergence and expression in practice. This communication of meaning involves ostensive expressions of meaning as distinct from lexical definitions of meaning in which the meaning of a value-word is communicated in relation to other words. Lexical expressions of meaning are helpful in pointing to the meanings of ostensive expressions of meaning as these are grounded in and emerge through practice.

**vi) Values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.**

In Living Educational Theory Research, I understand values as explanatory principles in explaining my educational influences in learning. By an explanatory principle I am meaning a reason that explains why I do what I do. My value of freedom, for example, is a reason for doing what I am doing, when I experience my freedom being denied. Like everyone else, I have a unique constellation of values, that I use as explanatory principles in explanations of my educational influences in learning. As I explore my question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' my focus on improvement is grounded in my experience and belief that I am not yet living my values as fully as I can. In other words, there is a possibility of improvement as I learn to live my values more fully in what I am doing.

In the life-skills programme supported at Sardar Patel University such values are described as: self-esteem, understanding and managing emotions, self-awareness, communication and empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, and creative and critical thinking (Rawal, 2020).

All of the living-educational-theory doctorates accessible from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> use the individual's unique constellation of values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

**vii) Using the data archive at <http://www.actionresearch.net>**

In my presentations on a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development I use the data archive at <http://www.actionresearch.net> in the following way.

a) Papers accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/writing.shtml>

Most of my presentations include participants who are either employed as academics in Higher Education or who are practitioner-researchers registered for their higher degrees, as part of the continuing professional development, from a range of professional contexts.

I usually connect recent publications with my audience. For example, in today's presentation I am drawing attention to two recent publications from staff at Sardar Patel University (Mishra, 2021; Rawal, 2020). To access Shivani Mishra's, (2021) paper on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in an Indian/global context.', presented at a 2021 AERA Symposium, click on <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/shivani.pdf> . You can access the powerpoint slides to support the presentation at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/shivani.pptx>

A Lightning Talk at the University of Cumbria on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 focused on 'A Living Educational Theory research approach to the professional development of educators and educational practitioners.' This is closely related to today's presentation on 'Living Educational Theory Research and the teacher as a professional'. In the Lightning Talk the participants were shown how to access the following papers and perhaps engage more fully with the ideas than is possible in a brief presentation:

- Huxtable, M. & Whitehead, J. (2021) 'Enhancing educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to Pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education.' *Educational Action Research* 29(2); 310-327. Accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/mhjwEAR0620.pdf>
- Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2016) Creating a Profession of Educators with the living-theories of Master and Doctor Educators, *Gifted Education International*, 32(1) 6-25. Accessed from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei2015/geicontents2016.pdf>

Because my understanding of research involves systematic inquiry that is made public, I stress the importance of making public, explanations of educational influences in learning. I stress the importance of opening to public criticism, any claims to have produced an evidence-based explanation. I explain that the Journal Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) has been publishing living-educational-theories since 2008 in presentations that are open to such public criticism and I do urge you to submit your living-educational-theory for consideration for publication in this multi-media Journal.

I show the most recent issue of EJOLTs and the archive at:

b) The archive of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) between 2008-2020 <https://ejolts.net/current> .

This includes Swaroop Rawal's paper, Rawal, S. (2021) Making Magic: What contribution has a Living Educational Theory approach made towards helping me to

improve the quality of my practice? EJOLTs 14(1) (in press). In her Abstract, Rawal explains:

This article contributes to a dialogue on the influence Living Educational Theory has had on the practice of a teacher as she tried to answer the question 'How do I improve my practice?' Here I elucidate how my living-educational-theory, through values-based dialogues, has enabled me to achieve practice research competency.

Seeking to answer the question 'What has the educational influence of the Living Educational Theory been on me and my work?' I revisited my doctoral thesis and the previous papers published in the Educational Journal of Living Theory authored by me. Starting from 2006, when I wrote my doctoral thesis, I track a journey of fifteen years and reveal the role of my living-educational-theory, which developed as I worked in the field of life skills education with students and teachers.

The values in the life skills programme supported by Sardar Patel University include self-esteem, understanding and managing emotions, self-awareness, communication and empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, and creative and critical thinking (Rawal, 2020).

To encourage participants to generate their own living-educational-theories I advocate starting with the creation and sharing of their living posters. I show the homepage of living-posters at:

c) Living-posters at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf>, with the guidelines on how to create and share a living-poster:

Creating a living-poster is easy! Create your poster as a single slide using a common programme such as PowerPoint. (You can create a page in a document using a programme like WORD if you prefer). A living-poster is intended as an opportunity to bring attention to your sites of practice and your research passions and interests and help you connect with people with similar research passions and interests.

Use images and minimal text to quickly communicate the essence of your sites of practice; interests; the values that motivate you and give your life meaning and purpose; research passions. Please use 'insert' (not copy and paste) and use low resolution images otherwise your file becomes huge!

Many participants, who are associated with Universities around the world, are not used to including 'I' within a research question. They are not used to seeing doctorates awarded for an individual's explanation of their educational influences in their own learning. For these reasons, I show more than 40, Living Educational Theory Research doctorates at:

d) Living Educational Theory Research doctorates at <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>

These doctorates have been legitimated at Universities around the world including in the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, South Africa, Nepal and Canada.

Another way of making public one's research for public criticism is through individual presentations and contributions at Conferences. Because of my desire to spread the influence of Living Educational Theory Research and to test the validity of the idea in global contexts,

I usually present a recent contribution to conferences such as those of the Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA), The Association of Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA), The Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), The British Educational Research Association, The American Educational Research Association and Living Educational Theory Research. I use the following ideas to help public criticism to enhance the validity and rigour of explanations of educational influences in learning.

#### **viii) Public criticism to enhance validity and rigour**

I stress the importance of submitting for public criticism a researcher's evidence-based explanation of their educational influences in learning. Such public criticism is focused on strengthening the objectivity of an explanation, whilst recognising the subjective ground of the explanation. I use Popper's (1975, p. 44) idea that objectivity is grounded in intersubjective testing that that objectivity can be enhanced through the mutual rational controls of criticism discussion.

To enhance the validity of an explanation of educational influence in learning I recommend the use of validation groups of some 3-8 people to subject the explanation to the following questions, informed by Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) ideas on social validity and asked by the researcher:

- i) How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- ii) How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my explanation?
- iii) How can I deepen and extend my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences on my practice and explanation?
- iv) How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in the sense of demonstrating that I am living my values as fully as I can?

To enhance the rigour of a researcher's explanation of educational influences in learning I recommend the use of Winter's (1989) six principles for enhancing rigour. These are dialectical and reflexive critique, risk, multiple resource, plural structure and theory practice transformation. I use Peggy Kok's (1995) use of these principles at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/peggyrigour.pdf> to show how they can be applied to enhance rigour.

#### **Interim Conclusion 2021**

As I seek to contribute to a future within which values of human flourishing are lived more fully, I continue with my commitment to spreading the generation and influence of Living Educational Theory Research with these values. This spreading influence includes the recognition of the importance of co-operating with others in improving educational practice and to deepening and extending the global knowledgebase of education. It includes the value of accepting educational responsibility as a citizen scholar for living and researching one's own practice in generating one's own living-educational-theory and encouraging and supporting others to do the same. I cannot overemphasise the importance of living co-operative values as fully as possible in contributing to a global social movement of Living Educational Theory Researchers (Co-op, 2021)

A group of participants at the 1st International Living Educational Theory Research Online Conference with the theme: Living Educational Theory research making a difference in communities & organisations, shared their living-posters to show their educational influences in local and global contexts:



See: <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingtheoryresearchgathering/index.asp>

If you access the 2021 homepage of living-posters at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf> you can access the recently added living-posters from an Indian Research Group. I urge you to create and share your own living-posters within a community of Living Educational Theory researchers who are contributing to this global social movement. I know that participants in this webinar come from a range of different counties and professional contexts. Do see if there is an appropriate community that you could join. If there isn't do please contribute your living-posters in generating such a community with your colleagues.



**Living Educational Theory researchers and networks developing educational knowledge, theory, practice and opportunities that contribute to the flourishing of humanity.**

Find a kindred spirit by exploring the researchers' living-posters where they give a snapshot of their sites of practice and research. Follow the links to find those in a group and/or network as well as those below. Use your back-button to return to this page.

**HOW to CREATE and SHARE your LIVING-POSTER...**

Click here to go to living-posters directory & archive

- Events
- Information and resources
- Jack Whitehead's website

Contact Jack Whitehead at [jack@livingtheory.org](mailto:jack@livingtheory.org) for further information

The mission of Sardar Patel University is focused on the regeneration of rural Indian life with the application of the study and research in all the disciplines of knowledge in tune with modern global developments. Without in any way detracting from this Mission I am suggesting that Living Educational Theory researchers, through exercising their educational responsibility as citizen-scholars and global citizens, focus some of their energies on enhancing the spread of values of human flourishing beyond the boundaries of India, into global contexts.

I hope that we meet along the way to share and enhance the flow of our life-affirming energies and the values of human flourishing in our accounts of what we are doing. I am thinking of what we are doing, in our particular and local, social contexts around the world, to spread the influence of life-affirming values through the generation and sharing of our own living-educational-theories in our own continuing professional development. Many thanks to the organisers at Sardar Patel University who have made possible this webinar.

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