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How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?

ATEE 2022 Winter Conference Sestri Levante, Italy 20-22 April 2022
Teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world,

Marie Huxtable & Jack Whitehead

Abstract

The research question, addressed in this paper is, 'How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?'. The theoretical framework is a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing teacher professional development. In this approach individual teacher-researchers generate and share a valid, evidence-based explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located. Its methodological design is influenced by methodological inventiveness in which each teacher-researcher generates their own methodological approach as they explore the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my continuing professional development?' The conclusions include the claim that the living-educational-theories of teacher-educators are promoting teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world. They are doing this through the generation and sharing of Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development within global contexts. These contexts include the UK, Canada, South Africa, India, Nepal and the Republic of Ireland, with values of human flourishing that distinguish an inclusive interconnected world.

Introduction

The current wars raging within and between communities in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Northern Africa make us acutely aware that whilst we live in a diverse and interconnected world it is far from inclusive or one where Humanity is able to flourish with humane values. We accept the declaration of UNESCO (2016) that:

Education is a human right and a force for sustainable development and peace. Every goal in the 2030 Agenda requires education to empower people with the knowledge, skills and values to live in dignity, build their lives and contribute to their societies.

Our research is driven by our belief that improving education will enable Humanity to learn how to work creatively and productively with diversity and bring into being an inclusive, humane world where all can flourish. We are taking the meaning of 'education' to be a life-long process of learning to live a humane life, which is personally satisfying and socially productive and worthwhile and contributes to the global and trans-generational flourishing of Humanity. Governments, education establishments such as schools, colleges and

universities, and those they employ as teachers, have a significant influence on the educational development of individuals and communities. Again words carry many meanings so it is important that we are clear what we mean by 'teachers'. We have made the argument (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2021a & Whitehead & Huxtable, 2022a) that teachers are more than instructors and trainers effectively and efficiently transmitting knowledge determined by a prescribed curriculum. Teachers are professional educators and educational practitioners with an educational responsibility to enhance the educational quality of their own and others teaching and learning with values of human flourishing. This is consistent with expressed purpose of the ATEE, "to enhance the quality of Teacher Education in Europe through active dialogue and international exchange of research and practice in initial and in-service teacher education".

In 2021 we presented a paper at the International Professional Development Association Conference on, 'Using A Living Educational Theory research approach to continuing educational, professional development.' Subsequently we used that as a basis for a paper, with the same title, to submit to *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny* (Education Research Quarterly). In doing so we continued our educational professional development and as professionals to:

... realise [our] responsibility to research [our] practice to improve it, generate [our] evidence-based explanations of [our] educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing, and contribute the validated knowledge they create to the growth of a global educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2022b).

Since then we have extended our thinking about research literacy as a 'global competency' in our contribution (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2021b). We are locating our answers to our questions within our understanding and commitment to enhancing professionalism in education:

We extend the notion of teacher's research literacy to include skills and knowledge, which enable teachers to fulfil their professional responsibility to research their educational practice to understand, improve and explain it and to contribute to their professional knowledge-bases. (p. 271)

In our most recent research into our question on enhancing professionalism, 'How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?' (Whitehead, & Huxtable, 2022c), we have focused on the importance of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to Community Based Educational Research, in contributing to an inclusive, interconnect world.

We have organised our presentation in terms of:

- i) The theoretical framework of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing teacher professional development.
- ii) The methodological designs of living-educational-theories

- iii) Our methodological design generated in the course of researching the question 'How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?'
- iv) Concluding - What now?

1) The theoretical framework of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing teacher professional development.

As we explained above, our approach to continuing teacher professional development includes the responsibility of the teacher to ask, research and answer questions of the kind, 'How do improve my professional educational practice?'. This research includes the generation and sharing of explanations of the educational influences of the teacher in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located. The theoretical framework of this Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing teacher professional development includes the clarification of the embodied values that distinguish what the teacher is doing as 'educational'. These values are used as explanatory principles in the explanations of educational influences in learning.

Enhancing the validity of the explanations is included in the theoretical framework. The process involves validation groups of some 3-8 peers responding to questions from the teacher, about the evidence and values-based explanations of educational influences in learning:

- How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my claim to knowledge in my explanation?
- How can I deepen and extend my sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings of their influence in my practice and understandings?
- How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in the sense of showing that I am living my values in my practice as fully as possible?
- How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?

This process of validation is based on Popper's (1975, p.44) insights that objectivity is grounded in intersubjective testing through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. The process of validation is also influenced by the four criteria of social validation described by Habermas (1975) in his work on communication and the evolution of society.

The process of validation is important in order to overcome any criticism that an explanation of educational influence in learning, grounded in the inquiry, 'How do I improve my professional practice?' is going to be subjective and anecdotal because it is grounded in the 'I' of the practitioner-researcher.

The theoretical framework is also based on the recognition that the expression of the embodied values of the teacher provide the explanatory principles in the explanations of

educational influences in learning. To clarify and communicate the meanings of these embodied values, ostensive expressions of meaning as well as lexical definitions are used. By this we mean that lexical definitions of value-words can take us some way to comprehending the meanings of values. Ostensive expressions of meaning take us further in comprehending the individual's embodied expression of meaning. The use of ostensive expressions of meaning are important because each individual has a unique constellation of values that they use to give meaning and purpose to what they do and that form explanatory principles in their explanations of educational influences in learning. You use your unique constellation of values as your standards of judgement, in judging whether or not you are improving your practice.

2) The methodological designs of living-educational-theories.

By a research methodology we are meaning the principles that establish how the research was carried out. You can recognise a Living Educational Theory Research methodology in terms of the principles that distinguish how an explanation for an individual's educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located, in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. Each individual's living-educational-theory methodology emerges, and is clarified, in the course of generating a valid, values and evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning.

Unlike other methodological designs that are used by educational researchers, the methodological designs of living-educational-theories are generated, in the course of producing a valid, values and evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning. This process of generation contrasts with the usual practice of defining and choosing the methodology before the research begins (Creswell, 2007).

The necessary condition for this generation is the exercise of the individual's methodological inventiveness. Dadds and Hart explain the importance of methodological inventiveness:

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes. (Dadds & Hart, p. 166, 2001)

If our aim is to create conditions that facilitate methodological inventiveness, we need to ensure as far as possible that our pedagogical approaches match the message that we seek to communicate. More important than adhering to any specific methodological approach, be it that of traditional social science or traditional action research, may be the willingness and courage of practitioners –

and those who support them – to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care. Practitioner research methodologies are with us to serve professional practices. So, what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should, be cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods or techniques...(Dadds & Hart, p. 169, 2001)

Each teacher, educator and educational-practitioner, as a professional accepts their educational responsibility to exercise their methodological inventiveness to generate their own approach to exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'

3) Our methodological designs are generated in the course of researching the question 'How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?'

'Teaching and learning' and related words such as, 'education', 'teacher', 'learner', 'pedagogy', 'pedagogue', are used with different meanings. They are not neutral words. Their meanings reflect the political, philosophical, and ethical positions and purposes of an individual within a social context. The meanings of the individual and their 'local' social contexts are influenced by the many social contexts within which they are located and those they, intentionally or unintentionally, influence. The social context may be that of a transitory community such as a Community of Practice (Wegerif, 2011), or one such as an establishment, for example a school, college, or university, a national organisation such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) or inter-national organisations such as the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) or UNESCO. The arguments for recognising teaching and learning as political acts are well rehearsed and we do not intend repeating them here. What we will do is point to the theme of the ATEE 2022 Winter conference, *Teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world*, which summarises our political, philosophical and ethical intentions and gives meaning to teaching and learning, and related words, for an inclusive, interconnected world.

Our concern - what we want to do is to understand, improve and explain educational (values-led) practice, which contributes to the learning of individuals, communities and Humanity to flourish and contribute to the growth of a global educational knowledgebase for the benefit of all.

Why are we concerned? – Because we live in an interconnected world; what happens in one location has global, long-term repercussions for all and everything. Humans cannot control natural events such as a volcano erupting and a resulting tsunami. What we can control is how we respond and what we do that has an impact on the planet and all on it, such as using fossil fuel, polluting the world with plastic and waging wars. Unless we learn how to live together peacefully and work constructively with diversity Humanity will not flourish, and will probably not even survive. The good news is that there are examples

where people have developed their abilities to teach and learn what is necessary for the common good. The recent coming together of the scientific community to develop the vaccines in response to the pandemic offers an example. Frankl offers another and a challenge to each of us in his writings and lectures when he emerged from the Nazi death camps (only recently published) and the world emerged from worldwide wars:

And this is where education for responsibility begins. Certainly, the burden is heavy, it is difficult not only to recognise responsibility but also to commit to it. To say yes to it and to life. But there have been people who have said yes despite all difficulties. And when the inmates in the Buchenwald concentration camp sang in their song, 'We still want to say yes to life', they did not only sing about it, but also achieved it many times – they and many of us in the other camps as well. And they achieved it under unspeakable conditions, external and internal conditions that we have already spoken enough about today. So, shouldn't we all be able to achieve it today in, after all, incomparably milder circumstances? To say yes to life is not only meaningful under all circumstances – because life itself is – but it is also possible under all circumstances. (Frankl, 2021, p. 123)

What data have we that is helping us to recognise, value and work with successful approaches developed by professional educators and educational practitioners who have accepted their responsibility to improve their teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world and contribute to the learning of Humanity to flourish? The data we offer and analyse here are the living-educational-theories teacher educators have contributed to a global educational knowledgebase in the form of doctorates and journal papers.

Data analysis

We are analysing the data here to justify our claims that:

- the living-educational-theories of teacher-educators are promoting teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world.
- They are doing this through the generation and sharing of Living Educational Theory Research into continuing professional development within global contexts

As we justify these claims with our evidence and values-based explanations of our educational influences in learning we present our explanations in public forums before presenting them for publication in academic journals. The data analysed here are doctorates and published papers from members of the community of Living Educational Theory Researchers around the world. It is important to understand that each explanation is grounded in the unique constellation of values of the professional teacher educator. There is no template for the explanations or methodologies. As we stressed in section 2, this is because the methodologies emerge, in the course of generating a valid, values and evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning.

Our first example is taken from a 1995 issue of Teacher Education Quarterly on Self-Study and Living Educational Theory. The special issue includes papers from 5 teacher educators

(from North America) with responses, from a Living Educational Theory Research perspective from Jack Whitehead (from the UK) on each paper. Whitehead focuses on the importance of including data from students and using this as evidence in an explanation of educational influence. He emphasises the importance of including in such explanations, not only one's own learning as a teacher educator but also in explaining one's educational influence as a teacher educator in the learning of one's students. Learning to improve educational practice as a teacher educator, has to include evidence of the educational influence in the learning of the student. This is necessary, not only to progress with acquiring the pedagogy necessary for communicating the content of the given curriculum, but also to process their educational development in learning to live a life that is satisfying, productive and worthwhile for self and other and contribute to the learning of Humanity to flourish.

This special issue is particularly significant as it marks the first international publication with evidence of the educational influence Living Educational Theory has in professional development of teacher educators, to improve their educational teaching and learning, for an inclusive, interconnected world.

A decade later in the Republic of Ireland Mairin Glenn's (2006), Bernie Sullivan's (2006), Caitriona McDonagh's (2007) and Mary Roche's (2007) theses, were legitimated with the award of doctoral degrees by Limerick University for their Living Educational Theory theses in 2006-7. The latest publication of these researchers (Sullivan, et al, 2022), provides evidence to support our claim that other-living-educational-theories of teacher-educators are promoting teaching and learning for an inclusive interconnected world. They are doing this through supporting the generation and sharing of Living Educational Theory Research into continuing professional development within global contexts:

We explain the generation of a living-educational-theory from the research community, which was convened by the authors. We have created both a face-to-face and an online professional development community of action researchers... The original contribution of this paper is the creation of an open and shared learning community to support action research practitioners in their processes of accessing, collaborating in and undertaking research. The significance of our paper is in the emergence of socially constructed knowledge in a fluid and flexible space that is underpinned by our lived values of inclusion and respect. (Sullivan et al., 2022, p.1)

In Hawaii, Jocelyn Demibag's (2015, p. 69) explanation of her educational influences in learning includes:

Ultimately, through the doctoral dissertation-process, I can finally say that I am not an imposter in the field of education. I am actually a doctor in the field of education —a Doctor-Educator as referred to by Whitehead and Huxtable (2014), and further, I am a professional practitioner. Professionalism in education is enhanced 'when we focus on the importance of continually creating and making public our embodied knowledge as educators through our practitioner-research' (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2014, p. 14).

Boland and Demibag (2017) explain how they are developing and transforming relationships with their values-embodied expressions of aloha and anthroposophy, and Demibag defines the meaning of Aloha from within her Hawaiian culture beliefs:

The aloha spirit – a warmth, acceptance, and inclusion extended to everyone. In addition, the Hawaiian cultural belief that the land is alive with spirit was one that eventually connected me intimately to the cosmos and then led me to anthroposophy, the philosophy which stands behind Waldorf schools. (p.21)

From his cultural context of Croatia Branko Bogнар (2013) explains the educational influences of his work in teacher educator (as a pedagogue), in empowering teachers' voices in initiating teachers' action research.

You can see the way in which Bogнар and Zovko (2008) have integrated their pupils' voices into their explanations of their educational influences in learning in their 2008 paper on 'Pupils as action researchers: Improving something important in our lives'. This includes access to video-clips of classrooms in which the 10 year pupils are using action-reflection cycles within their classroom community to present and improve their explanations.

From his cultural context of Pakistan, Sadrudin Qutoshi (2016, 2018) examines his educational influence in envisioning a transformative teacher education with his embodied values:

My purpose with these research themes was to demonstrate my embodied values through exploring, explaining and interpreting the themes arising from research questions, and to envision a transformative teacher education and research practices with reflexivity, inclusive logics, multiple genres and perspectival language as multiple ways of knowing. (2016, Abstract)

In the USA Farrell, Vernaza, Perkins, Ricketts-Duncan and Kimar (2012), have offered evidence and values-based explanations of how they have transcended boundaries and borders in constructing their living-educational-theories through multidimensional inquiries:

The purpose of this collaborative action research inquiry, by a team of university professors and doctoral students, was to assist us as we tried to transform and transcend to new levels of understanding regarding the overlapping relationships of teaching and learning through the methodologies of collaborative self-study and action research (Loughran, 2007). This paper describes the evolution of our journeys to understand how we influenced each other's learning and by extension the learning of others in our respective spheres. The research stories included are described through the theoretical lenses of living theory, pedagogy of care, and I-Thou relationships. In this self-study we offer explanations for how and why we acted in the context of our self-study. Data sources included journals, video and audio tapes of self-study group meetings, notes, email correspondence, and a variety of narratives and visuals. In order to justify our claim to knowledge, we produced evidence to show the extent of our influence on each other in a reciprocal way. By sharing these evidences we hoped to show "critical standards of judgment" (McNiff,

2005) by which others could evaluate our knowledge claim and the significance of our collaborative work.

Having started this section on data analysis with responses to teacher educators in the contents of the special issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* (1995) on Self-Study and Living Educational Theory we end it with 5 presentations, from teacher educators from Nepal, India, Canada, USA and the UK, in two AERA Symposia on educational responsibility (DeLong, et al., 2021) and equity (DeLong, et al., 2022). In explaining our educational influences in learning we highlight the importance of contributing to cultures of inquiry (DeLong, 2013) in spreading the influence of values of human flourishing in Living Educational Theory Research. Within our living-educational-theories we integrate insights from both an Eastern Wisdom tradition and a Western Critical Theory tradition in seeking to spread the influence of values of human flourishing in the face of present contexts of their denial.

4) Concluding - What now?

We have tried to answer our question, 'How can the living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?' As we have done so we have provided evidence of how Teachers and Teacher Educators worldwide have accepted their educational responsibility as professionals to hold themselves to account for living as fully as possible the unique constellation of humanitarian values that:

- give meaning and purpose to their life, and
- form their standards of judgement when answering questions of the kind,
 - 'How do you know that you have improved your educational influence in your own and in others' learning?'
 - 'What evidence do you have that you have had an educational influence in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which your practice is located?'

You can find further examples of the research of others who have done so in the *Educational Journal of Living Educational Theories* at <https://ejolts.net/current>. Many of these researchers have gone on doctoral journeys and you can see some completed doctorates at <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>.

We are hoping that our answer persuades you, as a professional Teacher and Teacher Educator, to:

- create your own living-educational-theories, and
- contribute accounts of your research to a global educational knowledgebase.

Many Teachers, Teacher Educators and other educational-practitioners have shared some details of their contexts and what they are trying to improve in the form of living-posters, which you can access at

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf>. Do please consider producing your own living-poster (see

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/livingposterletterA.pdf>). Many people have

found the process of producing a living-poster to send to us has helped them along the road of clarifying their educational practice, the sites of their practice and what motivates them.

We hope we have persuaded you:

- of how creating and contributing living-educational-theories can enable you to contribute to and benefit from an evolving community promoting teaching and learning for an inclusive interconnected world where individuals, communities and Humanity flourish by living humanitarian, educational, values as fully as possible in practice.
- to take action to create and make public accounts of your own Living Educational Theory Research for your own benefit, the benefit of others around you and, by contributing to a global educational knowledgebase help to bring into being an inclusive, interconnected world where Humanity flourishes.

We are looking forward to learning from and with you as you and we work on and share answers to the question, 'how can living-educational-theories of Teacher Educators promote teaching and learning for an inclusive, interconnected world?'

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