

A Workshop On Living Theory Research: Innovative Research Methods In Researching One's Own Higher Education.

Marie Huxtable and Jack Whitehead

University of Cumbria 3 June 2015

Abstract

This paper introduces some research methods used by educational practitioner researchers developing evidence-based and validated explanation of their educational influences in their own learning and in the learning of their students; developing knowledge through enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and; making public their embodied knowledge as an educator both for accreditation in masters and doctorate degrees and as a contribution to the growth of an educational knowledge-base.

Introduction

This paper is focused on how a practitioner can research their practice to improve it, gain accreditation and contribute to the growth of educational knowledge. We introduce Living Educational Theory research, which enables practitioner researchers to enquire into the embodied knowledge they express in their educational relationships with their students and colleagues, create values-based explanations of their educational influence in learning, and produce accounts of their living-theories which can be accredited and contribute to the professional knowledge-base of education.

We introduce research methods which enable educational practitioner researchers to begin and continue to inquire into their practice to create valid explanations of their educational influence in learning and helps them improve their practice, tap into what motivates them as an educator, develops their individual sense of their professionalism and contributes to the professional knowledge-base of education. We also introduce some ways of sharing explanations of educational influence, which enables us all to learn from and with each other and exemplifies the learning we expect from learners of all ages and stages.

After introducing Living Theory research and individual's living-educational-theories we describe how to:

- Use various research methods, such as action-reflection cycles and narrative enquiry to begin to explore the question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and create evidence-based, validated explanation of educational influence in learning.
- Use of digital, visual data of practice to clarify and communicate the values that give your professional practice meaning and purpose and that

you use as explanatory principles of educational influence and standards of judgment.

- Produce and make public multi-media valid explanations of your educational influences in learning for accreditation and as contributions to professional knowledge

Living Educational Theory (Living Theory) research and individual's living-educational-theories (living-theories)

Living Educational Theory researchers ask, research and answer questions of the form, 'how do I improve what I am doing', by generating valid, values-based explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations in which their practice is located. Accounts of these explanations constitute an individual's living-educational-theory (Whitehead, 1989) and make original contributions to educational knowledge. We make a distinction between Living Educational Theory research and a living-educational-theory. The meanings of Living Educational Theory research are paradigmatic in the sense that they are the abstract concepts that define the field of Living Theory research.

The self that is researched is distinct, unique *and* relational and wants to make a contribution to the flourishing of humanity: A self which is similar to that expressed by an African sense of Ubuntu often communicated in the phrase, 'I am because we are', together with the phrase 'We are because I am'. The ontological and relational, life-affirming and life-enhancing values that form the researcher's explanatory principles and living standards are clarified as they emerge in the course of their enquiry.

The focus of Living Educational Theory research is on enhancing the expression and influence in practice of humanitarian qualities such as vitality, humour, warmth, love, curiosity, creativity, surprise, enquiry, pride, interconnectedness, sustained effort, and a vibrant flow of a loving life-affirming and life-enhancing energy. Such living human qualities and values, so poorly communicated through simple words on a page, are what distinguish as educational the epistemology living-theories contribute to and the influence we want to have in learning.

Research methods

A research method can provide data as evidence of educational influence, and/or be used to help understand and research and/or communicate the ontological and relational values that the researcher use as explanatory principles and standards of judgment of their educational practice.

Living Theory research, being educational research, is concerned with improving learning and understandings within complex, multidimensional and relationally dynamic contexts. Whilst Living Theory researchers employ a variety of methods used in other methodologies, quantitative as well as qualitative ones such as Action Research, Autoethnography, Narrative Enquiry, Ethnography, Grounded

Theory, Case Study, Phenomenology. Other methods are also often needed because of the challenges that arise from the nature of the educational research.

The innovative research methods below were generated specifically in response to the challenges of researching to generate explanations of influence that contribute to the knowledge base of educational practitioners.

The research methods described more fully below are:

- i) Action reflection and reflexive cycles.
- ii) Digital Video.
- iii) Empathetic Resonance.
- iv) Multi-screen SKYPE.
- v) Living posters.
- vi) The creation and transformation of writerly into readerly accounts.
- vii) Validation.
- viii) Summary and integrating methods.

i) Action reflection and reflexive cycles

The action reflection and reflexive cycles were developed not only as a process of improving practice but also as a way of clarifying and communicating the ontological values the individual used as explanatory principles to explain their educational influence in their own learning.

Whitehead's first explication of action reflection cycles in the process of improving learning with pupils was in 1976 in the Schools Council Mixed Ability Exercise in Science. Working with a group of 6 teachers over some 18 months Whitehead first produced an evaluation report that explained the process of improvement in terms of models of innovation, of evaluation and of change in the teacher and learning process (Whitehead, 1976a). The teachers all criticised this evaluation report and asked Whitehead to reconstruct the report based on the data he had collected. This included audio and video recording of classroom practices, pupils' work, conversations and interviews with both teachers and pupils. The teachers accepted this second report as a valid explanation of the process of improving practice (Whitehead, 1976 b). The explanation was given within an action reflection cycle in which the teachers, concerns and problems were focused on the question of improving learning with 11-14 year olds in mixed ability science lessons. They imagined possible improvements, acted on a chosen action plan and gathered data on which to make a judgment on the effectiveness of their actions in terms of their value of enquiry learning. They modified their concerns and actions in the light of the evaluations and validated the evidence-based explanation of their educational influence in pupils' learning.

Reflexive cycles are focused on the values-based explanatory principles that are used in an explanation of educational influence in learning. Through the action reflection cycles, the meanings of the expression of embodied values are clarified and communicated in the course of their emergence in practice. The idea of reflexivity is focused on the awareness and explication of the principles that are guiding an individual's actions and forming the living standards of judgment that they use to evaluate the validity of their contribution to knowledge (Whitehead, 2014).

ii) The use of visual data - seeing and experiencing oneself as a living contradiction

The use of video can help to reveal the individual's existence as a living contradiction in holding certain values whilst at the same time negating them in practice. This visual data can be included in explanations of educational influence that contained 'I' as a living contradiction.

Much academic writing is governed by Laws of Logic dating back to Aristotle with his Law of Contradiction, which states that two mutually exclusive statements cannot both be true simultaneously. In the *Phaedrus* Plato opens up an awareness of existing as a living contradiction when he points out that dialecticians can hold both 'the one and the many together'. The 2,500 arguments between those who follow a propositional logic that eliminates contradictions from theory and those who follow a dialectical logic that holds contradiction to be the nucleus of theory, have often led proponents of these different traditions to deny the rationality of each other's theories. This kind of rejection can be seen in Popper's (1963) writings where he rejects dialectical claims to knowledge as, *'without the slightest foundation. Indeed, they are based on nothing better than a loose and woolly way of speaking'* (p.316).

From his dialectical perspective Marcuse (1964, p. 111) counters by claiming that propositional thinking conceals the dialectical nature of reality. Both agree that logic is a mode of thought that is appropriate for comprehending the real as rational (p. 105).

The epistemological significance of seeing and experiencing 'I' as a living contradiction in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', and in explanations of educational influence can be appreciated in relation to this 2,500 argument between formal and dialectical thinkers and their rejection of the rationality of each other's logic. Living Theory researchers can include 'I' as a living contradiction within their explanations of educational using a living logic to distinguish the rationality of their explanations without rejecting the rationality of propositional and dialectical thinking. Living Theory researchers include insights from both these traditions within their explanations of educational influence.

Whitehead first experienced himself as a living contradiction with the help of video of his classroom practice as a science teacher in 1972. He had been

provided with a video camera and recorder by the local inspectorate and asked to explore its educational influences in the science department. On watching the first lesson he videoed he experienced the embarrassment of seeing himself as a living contradiction. He valued enquiry learning in science where individuals asked and researched their own questions. He believed that he had established enquiry learning in his classroom where his pupils were asking their own questions and that he was responding to help with their enquiries. The video showed that he was, however subtly, giving the pupils the questions. As he watched the video he experienced himself as a living contradiction in the sense that his 'I' held together both the experience of valuing enquiry learning and at the same time negating enquiry learning in his practice. The value of this experience was that his imagination immediately started to offer possibilities for overcoming the contradiction in finding ways of living his value of enquiry learning more fully in the classroom. Some implications of this experience of being a living contradiction have been explored in a local curriculum development with 6 science teachers over some 18 months (Whitehead, 1976a & b) in which Whitehead explicated for himself for the first time an action-reflection cycles for his enquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

A way that Living Theory researchers can include visual data from their practice to show their 'I' existing as a living contradiction in their explanations of educational influence can be seen in Jones (2009). Jones also shows how visual data can be used with empathetic resonance to clarify, communicate and evolve meanings of embodied expressions of ontological and relational values.

iii) The use of empathetic resonance in clarifying, communicating and evolving meanings of embodied expression of ontological and relational values.

Using video recording to find a place where empathetic resonance is experienced can also be used to clarify and communicate an individual's ontological and relational values in explanations of educational influence in the learning of others.

The ontological and relational values of the practitioner-researcher are embodied and expressed in practice and their meanings are clarified in the course of their emergence as the Living Theory researcher researches their practice to improve it. Visual data can be used to clarify these values as they emerge in the course of an educational enquiry. This can be seen in Naidoo (2005) and Huxtable (2012). The importance of clarifying and using these values, in distinguishing the rationality of explanations of educational influence with their living logics, have been published elsewhere (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009; Whitehead, 2013).

We use Sardello's phrase 'empathetic resonance' (Sardello, 2008, p. 13) to communicate a feeling of the immediate presence of the other as we see evidence of their energy-flowing values that give meaning and purpose to their life. Whilst using Sardello's phrase our meanings differ from his where he identifies, from a

theistic perspective, empathetic resonance as the individual soul coming into resonance with the 'Soul of the World'. Coming from a secular humanist perspective our meaning of empathetic resonance is focused on our response to the embodied expression of values that we experience as carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity as well as giving meaning and purpose to the life of the individual expressing them.

Using empathetic resonance as a research method involves the use of digital video of professional practice. The cursor is moved backwards and forwards along a clip to where the viewer experiences an expression of a value they recognise as flowing with the energy that connects with the meanings that both practitioner and viewer identify as expressing meaning and purpose in the sense of carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity. Further description of this method can be found in Huxtable's paper in Research Intelligence (Huxtable 2009). This innovative method was developed in Living Theory research because of the importance of clarifying, communicating and evolving the embodied expressions of the meanings of values in explanations of educational influence in learning, which printed text alone cannot do.

iv) Multi-screen SKYPE

The use of multi-screen SKYPE enables data to be gathered that can be used as evidence in explanations of educational influence in the learning of social formations bearing in mind Bourdieu's point about the 'automatisms of the *habitus*':

The objective adjustment between dispositions and structures ensures a conformity to objective demands and urgencies which has nothing to do with rules and conscious compliance with rules, and gives an appearance of finality which in no way implies conscious positing of the ends objectively attained. Thus, paradoxically, social science makes greatest use of the language of rules precisely in the cases where it is most totally inadequate, that is, in analysing social formations in which, because of the constancy of the objective conditions over time, rules have a particularly small part to play in the determination of practices, which is largely entrusted to the automatisms of the *habitus*. (Bourdieu, p. 145, 1990)

We wish to draw attention to an important distinction between social and educational actions. Schutz (1972) has pointed out that 'Not every type of contact between human beings has a social character; this is rather confined to cases where the actor's behavior is meaningfully orientated to that of others' (p. 30). The distinction we are making between a social action, that is distinguished by an actor's behaviour being meaningfully orientated to that of others, and an educational action, is focused on the expression and representation of flows of life affirming energy in the life of an individual that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity. Many educational actions include social actions. But not all educational actions are social. Not all explanations of educational influences

in learning are derived from social theories. We make this point in the knowledge that we value insights from social and other theorists and integrate these within our own living theories. We are claiming that the life-affirming energy in explanations of educational actions and influences is beyond the social, whilst carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity in extending convivial and productive spaces which we consider in more details below. Hence our focus on **educational influences** in the learning of social formations.

Recording multiscreen SKYPEs offers a Living Theory research method for gathering data that can provide evidence in explanations of educational influences in the learning of social formations. The significance of the multiscreen SKYPE conversations for Living Theory research methods is in the shift of focus from an individual speaker in face-to-face conversations, to a greater awareness of relationships and mutuality of influences in groups, communities and networks. It also enables each member to literally see ourselves in relationship with other participants as they are in the educational conversation and so be more aware of the relationally dynamic nature of space and boundaries between them (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009). Riding's (2008) claim to have made an original contribution to educational knowledge can be seen in the title and abstract of his doctoral thesis to be focused on '...improving the quality of living educational space?'

How do I contribute to the education of myself and others through improving the quality of living educational space? The story of living myself through others as a practitioner-researcher.

Within this text I propose and demonstrate an original relationally dynamic standard of judgement within my practice of Living Myself Through Others. I explore the ongoing nature of transition between living educational spaces upon myself and how this process of change is addressed as I move through different stages of my career and life. I argue that I am able to improve the quality of the living educational space because of the relationships and experiences that I have had, alongside the living core values that I hold. This thesis reflects on the potential impact of enabling teachers to engage as teacher-researchers within their own school and accounts for the process I went through in order to make this happen. I further argue for the need to consider how practitioner accounts are assessed in order to ensure that the future of education is driven forward through the development of teachers as researchers influencing what educational knowledge is and how it is produced. The following text is a living educational theory action research enquiry that utilises autobiography as a way of accounting for one educator's transitions from being a classroom teacher, through middle leadership and finally into senior school leadership. I argue that I am the educator that I am because of the life I have led and the life that I am currently leading. This thesis addresses the vastly important influence of relationships within education and explores how these relationships impact on my practice as an educator. The text incorporates and captures these

relationships through enabling these others to speak through their own voice. This thesis explores how I was able to create the shared living educational space necessary to enable teacher-research to occur and flourish. (Riding, 2008)

At the heart of the idea of explaining educational influences in the learning of social formations, is an educational process of extending convivial and productive space. The focus on this **extension**, rather than on **defining** the meaning of such phrases as 'carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity', is because of a danger of 'reification' of such meanings. This danger was pointed out by Robyn Pound at a Breakfast Café Conversation in Bath on the 29th May 2015. Robyn explaining that a phrase Whitehead had used, 'carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity', resonated with her experiences and reflections and that she had started to use the phrase, as others had done. Robyn pointed out the danger of the phrase losing its embodied meaning, as expressing a value that can give meaning and purpose to one's life, by being used as a conceptual abstraction.

In an attempt to retain a direct connection with the creative and critical responses of individuals as they seek to make a difference in the world, we shall try to avoid such reification of concepts such as 'social formation' and 'carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity', by trying to remember to always connect them to the processes of extending the convivial and productive spaces and relationships we experience in the EJOLTS community, the Sunday evening's Research Support Group and the Friday morning's Breakfast Café Conversations. We are finding Delong's (2015) idea of a living culture of inquiry helpful in remaining grounded in the processes of extending convivial and productive spaces.

The first image below is from a SKYPE conversation with the Sunday evening research support group. The meetings are recorded and uploaded as unlisted or private to YouTube afterwards so members can access the recording for an aide memoire as to what was said and as visual data for their research.

The group comprised at the time some 10 members, not all of who can be present on every occasion. As Jack looks at himself on the bottom row of the images he is aware of living in a network of multiple relationships within which each person is aware of themselves as unique and distinct individuals and as connected and participatory individuals within various networks, groups and communities, including this one.



Image 1. A Living Theory SKYPE research support group meeting

During the conversation Jack focussed on image 1 taken as a screen grab during the conversation which included: Per Jensen from Denmark – Per is working on a practitioner-researcher project in Sweden and is collaborating with Arianna Briganti in a project in Albania; Arianna Briganti – Arianna is a developmental economist working on a project in Albania and registered for her doctorate at the University of Cumbria supervised by Jack, Moira Laidlaw and David Murphy; Tammy Nichols, a teacher from the UK - Tammy is registered for her doctorate at the University of Cumbria supervised by Barry Hymer and Peter Boyd; Teri Young a researcher at Antioch University in the USA – Teri is registered for her doctorate with Antioch University; and ourselves from the UK - who convene the research support group and the University of Cumbria Living Theory research group which the Tammy and Arianna's doctoral supervisors belong to. We are mindful of members of the SKYPE research support group who were not with us on that occasion and the interconnections between each of the members of this group and others, such as the University of Cumbria Living Theory research group (which we have given an indication of) and the multidimensional relationally dynamic ripples which touch other networks, groups and individuals.

The research method of multiscreen SKYPE enables data to be gathered, as shown above, and used as evidence in explanations of educational influence in the learning of social formations and contributes to the evolution of educational knowledge. An example can be seen in the December 2013 issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories accessed at <http://ejolts.net/node/209>.

A second use of multiscreen SKYPE as a research method is to bring people into a locality based conference or workshop and contribute to the creation of global educational networks and communities of practices. For instance, Jacqueline Delong's successful proposal for a Town Hall Meeting at ARNA, which can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNA2015TownHallProposal090215.pdf>, included:

The intent of this Town Hall meeting is to engage practitioner-researchers across the globe as on site and virtual, through the internet, attendees in a living-culture-of-inquiry through values-based dialogue in creating living theories (explanations of our influence).

Multi-screen SKYPE conversations are shown to be influencing our perceptions of the idea of Ubuntu that 'I am because we are/we are because I am' or i~we for shorthand and enabling us to 'pool' our lifeaffirming and life-enhancing energies, as well as sharing and evolving our relationally dynamic culture of inquiry and Living Theory research.

Educational researchers located around the world accepted the invitation to be virtual participants. In image 2 below, you can see Swaroop Rawal (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/SwaroopRawal2704.pdf>) from India on the big screen (it was around 3.00 am for Swaroop so required her strong commitment to participate!) On the three computers below the screen facing the participants in the room were Liz Wolvaardt and Pieter du Toit from South Africa (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/PieterLiz2704.pdf>), Bonnie Kaplan, Lee Scott (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/leescott240415.pdf>) and Linda Vargas (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/LindaVargas2704.pdf>) from South Africa, Bernie Sullivan and Pip Bruce Ferguson from the Republic of Ireland (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/1Irish2704.pdf>), Teri Young from the USA and Sonia Hutchison from the UK (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/SoniaHutchison2704.pdf>) and Andrew Henon, also from the UK (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/AndrewHenon2704.pdf>), who was on audio but without the video (ah the joys of the IT gremlins).



Image 2. Multiscreen SKYPE at ARNA Town Hall event 2015

An example of how this enabled people physically and virtually present in the room to participate can be seen in the recording accessible from <https://youtu.be/DVbXwolxuF0>.

After the Town Hall meeting, Jacqueline Delong, the convenor of the Town Hall Meeting, wrote to the SKYPE participants to ask for their responses. Bernie Sullivan from Ireland responded with thoughts that included the recognition of a life-affirming and supportive environment and creating global educational networks of communication:

Hi Jackie,

...It was an exhilarating and life-enhancing experience to find myself in the company of a wide-ranging and diverse group of practitioner-researchers from around the globe.... Participating in the Town Hall Skype discussion enabled me to realise that there are many people throughout the world who hold values similar to mine. As participants narrated the stories of their individual research endeavours, I experienced the sense of a life-affirming and supportive environment. Even though I could not hear all contributions clearly, it was evident that participants were presenting their stories in a positive and encouraging atmosphere.

My overall impression was that we were part of a worldwide community of practice, where all voices were valued and appreciated. I experienced at first hand Jack's commitment to creating global educational networks of communication, as well as his desire to influence the education of social formations. Regards, Bernie.

v) Living posters

Living-posters can be used to gather data that can be used in an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and also in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located.

The notion of living posters arose from a concern of Whitehead's to enable practitioner researchers developing educational praxis to join the Town Hall Meeting of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference in Toronto on the 8th May 2015 through multi-screen SKYPE. It became evident that many wouldn't be able to participate for various reasons so the other question became clearer, how to enable people who could not physically, or virtually participate in real time to be 'presenced' with their work. There would be little time to go into any detail so the notion emerged of asking them to provide an attractive flier that could be shown – a flier that would attract attention to the research and work that was giving meaning and purpose to the educational practitioner's life.

The challenge of creating a living-poster is related to but different to a traditional abstract for a paper, dissertation or thesis. All offer a disciplined focus that demands a distillation to extract the essence of a complex picture. Hence the challenge of producing an abstract in the process of creating a paper or thesis can help the researcher to clarify what constitutes the practice they are wanting to improve and the values that form their explanatory principles and standards of judgment. A living poster offers a similar challenge for the researcher to use text, image and video to produce a representation that provides a window into their research at a moment in time and the influential connections to thinking, people, collectives and networks in influencing social formations.

Living posters, as a research method, has potentially two inter-related uses for a Living Theory researcher developing valid explanations of their educational influences which:

- 1) enhance their educational influence in their own learning and
- 2) enhances the contributions they make to and the benefit they derive from the learning of others and social formations.

These are, 'distinct but not discrete' (Rayner 2005, p. 1). It is possible to use a living poster in the same way as you could use entries for a journal or diary for private reflective and reflexive thinking, which may, or may not be used as data and/or evidence at a later date. By making your living posters public you can invite others to help you develop a valid explanation of your educational influence in your own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations and contribute to established, and the emergence of new, 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Living Theory research communities of practice are formed when groups of people, who share a concern

or a passion for something they do and want to learn how to do it better *and* want to produce valid explanations of their educational influences, come together regularly for convivial, productive conversations.

The brief for creating a living poster has evolved to:

1. Create and upload a video-clip (absolute max 3 mins) to YouTube of you communicating the essentials of your: context; interests; ontological and relational values that motivate you; research passions.
2. Create an attractive A4 page using images and text, which includes brief details of your: context; interests; ontological and relational values that motivate you; research passions; details of a few of your key publications; the url to your website if you have one; your contact details and the url to your YouTube video.
3. 4 words (max) that communicate what you are about.

The posters were brought together into one as a 'homepage' for presentation at the ARNA Town Hall, which you can access from:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/arnaposters270415.pdf>,



If you go onto the homepage it is organised with the networks at the top. If you go into one you will see some of the images of the people who form the community or network with a couple of words to give you a clue as to what they

are about to help you decide whether to dip into their individual poster, if they have one. If you do you will find links to other networks they are part of to help you further connect with more people with whom you may share a particular interest.

Below the networks you will find thumbnails of individual posters again with a few words to give you a quick idea as to whether you might find it interesting to go into the poster and learn more. Each person has given you a link to a YouTube of them talking for just a couple of minutes so you can get a feel for who they are and what they are about. Each poster is unique and offers an insight into the unique contribution that person is making.

From: Mairin Glenn

Sent: Monday, 4 May 2015, 16:37

Subject: Re: ARNA poster - NEARI poster - please respond ASAP

... I love the sense I get from your ARNA poster that we are not alone; that we are not the only people in the village who think a little differently! I have bookmarked it into my Favorites already.

Responses by people who created posters have also led on to thinking that rather than just being a way of finding connections this might also be a useful research method:

- For someone who is embarking as a Living Theory researcher as another way of recognising what they are doing that is important to them, their embodied ontological and relational values they are expressing and want to express more fully. For example, Surrinder Sandham-Bains' poster at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/Surrinderbains2704.pdf>, Surrinder wrote:

From: Surrinder Sandham-Bains

Sent: Thursday, 21 May 2015, 8:08

... I had sent in 3 drafts of my poster and each one was slightly different. Attached is the final one and it is indeed very interesting when I look at it now.

What strikes me is the things that are important to me currently are larger than the picture of the nurse which is smallest. Perhaps my subconscious knew things that I had not yet acknowledged to myself. It helped me to appreciate the value in being creative in whatever form as who knows what may become apparent. So I will definitely do more posters at various stages in my life to identify what is most important to me...

And for an experienced Living Theory researcher such as Jacqueline Scholes-Rhodes (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/JacquiSR2704.pdf>) who wrote:

From: Jacqui Scholes-Rhodes

Sent: Saturday, 30 May 2015, 18:00

... it's been an amazing challenge to try and articulate everything that's been coming together in my mind over the last few months AND make sense of it in a way that I could share. As I now explore a very different aspect of my narrative voice, emerging from the core insights of both my original research and my professional coaching practice, I am drawn back to the power of the journal-writing as a means of both telling and re-telling our stories – a generative, dialogic and affirmative space in we can explore and make sense of our learning journeys. These are the new research interests that are really driving me forward ...

- For Living Theory researchers developing their IT skills and to offer insights into their evolving living-theories to communities and the worlds of practice beyond the Academy for example See Shelagh Hetreed's <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/ShelaghHetreed0105.pdf> who wrote:

From Shelagh Hetreed

Sent: Thursday, 14 May 2015, 18:53

... What I learnt:

That I am too easily put off by technology-

didn't know how to put text & photos on A4 (word)

cannot edit videos and find them difficult to send anywhere!

However, once I experimented with powerpoint (have only ever used it for presentations), I gave myself permission (a rare occurrence) to select images which inspired words which I had not been aware of before. I felt that my poster was ME in a nutshell.

I realised how important my images are and how they speak for me.

I love the idea of myself as the shadow, there but somehow behind and in the background- putting the people in the foreground to be heard, to challenge and to make a statement.

I realise that I have missed having something to contribute- my writing has had to give way to other restraints and time limitations. However my photos are endlessly challenging and fascinating. They give me such pleasure. Currently I am photographing dandelions etc. from ground level, catching the sky and trees almost randomly.

As discussion proceeded between us (Huxtable and Whitehead), young people engaged in the BRLSI researchers project, (<http://www.brslsiyouthgallery.org/>) initiated by Paul Thomas, were being introduced to how to create and appraise academic posters by Dr Paul Shepherd. The young people went on to create posters to communicate their scientific enquiries and the doctoral students, who had been supervising the young people's research, created posters to communicate their learning journey through the project. You can access the posters and videos of the presentations and questions at the mini conference from <http://www.brslsiyouthgallery.org/brlsi-researchers/mini-conference/>

Their posters and presentations lead us to ask whether children, young people and adults with little or no connection with universities can create their living posters which can contribute as evolving accounts of living-theories to the growth of educational knowledge and the spread of understanding and practice of Living Theory research and the educational influence of individual's living-theories beyond the bounded worlds of the Academy and worlds of practice such as those of school, FE and HE.

We have yet to see whether it is possible for the young people and the students to create their living posters. The brief might include questions such as:

- What is motivating you
- What are you passionate about
- What are you doing that is meaningful and important to you
- Who has contributed to your learning journey
- What ideas have influenced you

The question we are still to address is whether the knowledge offered in the form of a living poster can become a valid contribution to knowledge given that a Living Theory research validation process is a creative and not simply judgmental one (see validation as research method later). The people visiting the homepage contribute to, as well as learn from, the posters by offering responses to strengthen the validity of their poster by saying what might help the poster to: be more understandable; offer sufficient evidence of claims the person makes to know as well as any claims they make about their influence in learning; provide sufficient information about the context – the inter, intra and extra personal contexts - for people to know and comprehend what is being said and; enable the audience to judge the authenticity of what they are being told. see validation section vii below.

vi) Creating and transforming writerly into readerly texts

Living Theory researchers have found it necessary to develop an innovative method for deepening their understanding of their praxis and communicating their meanings in their explanations of educational influence through creating accounts of their living-theory as artefacts that communicate beyond a moment. They go through two distinct processes: first producing 'writerly' relationally-

dynamic multimedia narratives and then transforming the writerly account into a 'readerly' one, that are tested as valid explanations and contribute to the evolution of an educational epistemology for instance in the form of papers to journals for peer review, examples can be found in the open review space of <http://www.ejolt.org>, or for legitimation by the Academy for accreditation, such as the masters and doctorates accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

The writerly text is a process of coming to understand, to literally be able to see, what you are thinking. It is not a linear process. It comprises creating a multimedia narrative from the evolving stories we tell ourselves to explain the world and how we live in it to ourselves. This is an organic, creative process where the continually evolving stories are moved into different juxtapositions and in the process create new stories. Where to start and when to stop? Start with what you want to say and keep going until you have written yourself out. The method can help you to recognise and clarify your meanings for yourself as they emerge. Sharing your writerly narrative can sometimes be very helpful as others might be able to help you notice and attend to what you are too close to see.

Rather than trying to impose structure and define a route at this point, we have found that, like Collingwood, allowing your self to be in the fog and writing about what comes to mind at that time often seems to clarify what is important. That then becomes part of the research, even if it does not seem to give rise directly and immediately to the formulation of research questions. The research question that does finally emerge is not one located in an idealised world of tomorrow, which never happens, but in the here- and-now, given all the constraints and tensions of the real world, of which we are a part of and wish to improve.

Graham, who describes himself as an essayist, programmer, and investor, offers a similar insight into how to begin in 'The Age of the Essay':

'... Essayer is the French verb meaning "to try" and an essai is an attempt. An essay is something you write to try to figure something out.

Figure out what? You do not know yet. And so you can't begin with a thesis, because you do not have one, and may never have one. An essay doesn't begin with a statement, but with a question. In a real essay, you do not take a position and defend it. You notice a door that's ajar, and you open it and walk in to see what's inside.

If all you want to do is figure things out, why do you need to write anything, though? Why not just sit and think? Well, there precisely is Montaigne's great discovery. Expressing ideas helps to form them. Indeed, helps is far too weak a word. Most of what ends up in my essays I only thought of when I sat down to write them. That's why I write them.

In the things you write in school you are, in theory, merely explaining yourself to the reader. In a real essay you're writing for yourself. You're thinking out loud.' (Graham, 2004)

The tendency is to want to dash to the end and write to explain yourself to the reader. This is what we are calling a 'readerly text'; a text, or multimedia narrative that attracts and holds the attention of someone else, and communicates the knowledge you have created educationally. By that we mean we want to communicate in such a way that our account of our living-theory stimulates the imagination of readers in a manner that enhances their own learning and research.

To create a 'readerly text' begin by creating a 'writerly text'. A writerly text is created in the first place not with a view to what the readerly text may be but, like Graham, to enable the researcher to recognise, value and work with the knowledge they have created in the process of researching to improve their living-theory praxis. We are not using the phrases 'readerly text' or 'writerly text' in the form meant by Barthes, which Hall (2001) explains:

'To summarize, a text can be seen as readerly or writerly depending upon the positioning of the reader. Barthes (1976) described this as follows.

... literature may be divided into that which gives the reader a role, a function, a contribution to make, and that which renders the reader idle or redundant, left with no more than the poor freedom to accept or reject the text and which thereby reduces him to that apt but impotent symbol of the bourgeois world, an inert consumer to the author's role as producer. (Barthes, 1976: 113)' (Hall, 2001, p. 155)

Barthes is concerned with clarifying the role of the reader. We are concerned in the first place with the role and purpose of creating the account for the creator. These writerly texts invariably begins with writing about what is important to you, and then, keep writing until you have written yourself out. This writing often includes incidences of childhood that have influenced the development of your values as well as current concerns. The researcher is encouraged to share these early writings within the educational research group. When the work is articulated it enables the researcher and others to share and learn from their responses. This co-operative enquiry often helps each person to clarify their values as they emerge in the living- boundary between what is private and personal. It is an important movement for many, when they move from solitary introspection to having the confidence and trust in themselves and others to offer their not knowing. As the writings and a focus begins to emerge the researcher draws in other stories work created in the organic phase of their research.

In the organic phase numerous multimedia narratives can be created, which may appear to have no coherence or even relevance at the time. This may not be when they have a focus or even an intention to create an account. The researcher

may begin by telling, often apparently disconnected, stories of what is important to them, and a brief autobiographical story to help them begin to clarify their values and beliefs, and recognise their embodied and acquired knowledge. As their thinking progresses they can begin to see where they are living a contradiction, what they need to do differently, and imagine possibilities, act accordingly, evaluate and so on.

The question to be addressed through the research, the data to collect, and the form of the process, are often not known at the beginning, and may only emerge as the enquiry proceeds. Sometimes this is a case of recognising that the enquiry has been going on for years, and the researcher may have unrecognised data scattered about them as Barry Hymer (2007) found when working on his doctoral thesis.

In the organic phase of research, stories may be created variously as time, other commitments and interests move. On one occasion, you may be reading, and find work that excites you and create notes for yourself while working on an action-reflection cycle dictated by circumstances or interest. On another occasion, you may get an idea of something you might do, but do not follow through in action although this took your thinking forward. As you move through life and create trails in the form of narratives, notes, images and videos, when you move from reflecting-in-action to reflect on action, you have data scattered round to draw on as you work on the systematic phase of your research. However, as Lather puts it when talking of 'ironic validity': 'The text is resituated as a representation of its 'failure to represent what it points toward but can never reach....' (Lather, 1994, p. 40- 41).' (Donmoyer, 1996 p. 21)

Working with video and accompanying text to produce a multimedia narrative further clarifies the thinking for reader and researcher. What went well and what did not? What have they learned about them self as artist and as the person they are and want to be in the world? Did they express their values as fully as they could? What talents did they develop and what do they want to enhance further and how? What do they now want to do to continue to live a loving, satisfying and productive life that is worthwhile? And so the questions tumble out, and their thinking progresses as they struggle to answer them. However, without making some account, that learning will be lost to them and to others.

We see what we look for through our continually developing lenses honed by our responses and interactions with the complex ecology of our lives. Elkins (1997) describes the complexity and inter-relational nature of looking. Neugarten (2003) in his paper on 'seeing' and 'noticing' points to a creative and dynamic process:

'... it is not so much our eyes that see, but rather our brains. Far from 'seeing is believing', what we believe can seriously affect what we see. We shall show that 'there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball', and that looking too hard, getting too close, and being too focused is often counterproductive...' (p.93)

So, we get what we look for. Similarly the way in which imaginings of reality forms that reality and questions can only be formed with a thought for their answers. However the process is subtle in its complexity. In communicating to and with self and others, to make sense of the organic flow of adventures and journeys, a person may create a new insight and understandings of what they have been doing and begin to form an explanation emerging from as yet undescribed events. In that process a person may seek to understand and theorise not only what has emerged of their physical and social world, but also to understand them self – the world within - and them self in and of the world asking, 'what values have I used to account for and explain my improving practice, what do I understand about myself as a learner, in relation to others, the passions I can now recognise I had, and may want to pursue, which will drive the systematic phase of the research?

Often that is where it stops with many people reluctant and resistant to 'test' any of these stories and going through the often emotionally challenging process of transforming the writerly account into a readerly one . This transformation often occurs when what is clarified towards the end of the writerly account is brought to the beginning of the readerly account as a 'framing' to take the reader through the meanings of the living-theory account.

Whilst the writerly text has much in common with Barthes (1974) understanding of a writerly text we advocate, unlike Barthes, the transformation of the writerly text into a readerly text both to communicate an explanation of educational influence and as a submission as an original contribution to knowledge, for accreditation by the Academy.

Barthes argues that writerly texts are more important than readerly texts. For Barthes, the readerly text disguises its status as a fiction, as a literary product, and presents itself as a transparent window onto "reality." In contrast to the readerly text, the writerly acknowledges its fiction by calling attention to the various rhetorical techniques which produce an illusion of realism. (p. 4).

In Living Theory research both the writerly and readerly texts are important. In the writerly phase the researcher clarifies for themselves, in a narrative form that can include multi-modal data, an explanation of educational influence. In transforming the writerly text into a readerly text, the intention is not to falsify the explanation in order to communicate it. It is to offer the readerly text as an original contribution to educational knowledge in the form of a validated explanation of educational influence.

vii) Validation

Living Educational Theory research has legitimated an educational epistemology in terms of a unit of appraisal, standards of judgement and logic. The unit of appraisal is the individual's explanation of educational influence. The living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) are the embodied, energy-flowing values that are used by the individual, together with their insights from conceptual

theories, to explain their educational influences in learning. We think that it is worth emphasising that the living logic (Whitehead, 2013) of each living-theory is the mode of thought, used by each individual, for comprehending the real as rational (Marcuse, 1964, p. 105) in their explanation of educational influence.

Living Theory researchers needed an innovative method of validation to support this academic legitimisation. This was developed from Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) original ideas on communication and validity:

I shall develop the thesis that anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated (or redeemed: *eislösen*). Insofar as he wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following – and indeed precisely the following – validity claims. He claims to be:

- a. *Uttering* something understandably;
- b. Giving (the hearer) *something* to understand;
- c. Making *himself* thereby understandable; and
- d. Coming to an understanding *with another person*.

The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression (*verständlich*) so that speaker and hearer can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true (*wahr*) proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully (*wahrhaftig*) so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust him). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right (*richtig*) so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background. Moreover, communicative action can continue undisturbed only as long as participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified." (Habermas, 1976, pp. 2-3)

Drawing on these ideas Whitehead introduced the idea of validation groups into Living Theory research with the purpose of strengthening the validity of accounts of the explanations of educational influence. Living Theory researchers are encouraged to submit their draft accounts regularly and at least three times a year, to avoid data overload. This overload can occur when researchers focus on gathering data rather than on producing draft explanations that include data as evidence. A validation group can often comprise between 3-8 peers to obtain a range of responses to the following questions:

- i) How could I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- ii) How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions or claims to know?

- iii) How could I extend and deepen my sociohistorical and sociocultural awareness of their influence in my practice and explanation?
- iv) How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in showing that I was truly committed to living my espoused values as fully as possible?

Summary, integrating methods and accreditation and contributing to professional knowledge

It is important to remember that every individual can create their own unique and original living-educational-theory as their explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which the practice is located. The innovative research methods described above emerged from enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' as individual's created their explanations of educational influence. Such methods are included in the living-theory-methodology generated by each individual as they create their living-educational-theory. Such methodologies rest on the creativity of each practitioner-researcher in terms of their methodological inventiveness as described by Dadds and Hart (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, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques..."(Dadds & Hart, p. 169, 2001)

By gaining academic accreditation for your embodied, professional knowledge, as educators and other practitioner-researchers, you can help to transform the knowledge-base of the academy to include the practical principles we use as professionals to explain our educational influences. For many years these practical principles were replaced in explanations of the higher education of individuals by the principles of disciplinary knowledge. The grounds given for this replacement were that the practical principles we used to explain our influence were at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more theoretical justification (Hirst, 1983, p. 18).

If your values, as explanatory principles, carry hope for the flourishing of humanity, can be accredited in the Academy as valid knowledge, their influence can be communicated globally, because of recognition by Universities around the world of the validity of knowledge that is recognised and accredited in the global Academy. Hence the educational and global significance of gaining academic accreditation for your Living Theory research and your living-educational-theories.

References

- Barthes, R. (1974) *S/Z. Paris: Éditions du Seuil*, 1970. **S/Z**. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford CA; Stanford University Press.
- Dadds, M. & Hart, S. (2001) *Doing Practitioner Research Differently*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Delong, J. (2015) *A pedagogy of loving into learning in living-cultures-of-inquiry*. A presented at the 2015 Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) Conference, Ontario Institute For Studies in Education, Toronto, Canada May 10, 2015. Retrieved 15 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNAjdd260415.pdf>
- Elkins, J. (1997) *The Object Stares Back: On the nature of seeing*. New York: Harvest Book Harcourt, Inc.
- Graham, P., 2004. *The Age of the Essay* Accessed 4th March 2011 from <http://www.paulgraham.com/essay.html>.
- Habermas, J. (1976) *Communication and the evolution of society*. London: Heinemann.
- Hall, K., 2001. An analysis of primary literacy policy in England using Barthes' notion of 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. 1(2), pp. 153-165.
- Hirst, P. (Ed.) (1983) *Educational Theory and its Foundation Disciplines*. London: RKP
- Huxtable, M. (2009) How do we contribute to an educational knowledge base? A response to Whitehead and a challenge to BERJ. *Research Intelligence*, 107: 25–26. Retrieved 11 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/mh2009beraRI107.pdf>
- Huxtable, M. (2012). *How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/mariehuxtable.shtml>

Jones, C. (2009). *How do I improve my practice as an inclusion officer working in a children's service*. MA dissertation, Bath Spa University. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/cjmaok/cjma.htm>

Laidlaw, M. (1996). *How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my educational development?* Ph.D. Thesis. University of Bath. Retrieved 1 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/moira2.shtml>

Lave, E. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

Marcuse, H. (1964) *One Dimensional Man*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Neugarten, M. (2003) Seeing and Noticing: an Optical Perspective on Competitive Intelligence. *Journal of Competitive Intelligence and Management*. 1(1), pp. 93-104.

Naidoo, M. (2005) *I am because we are (A never ending story). The emergence of a living theory of inclusional and responsive practice*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Bath. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/naidoo.shtml>

Popper, K. (1963) *Conjectures and Refutations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rayner, A. (2005) INCLUSIONALITY: The Science, Art and Spirituality of Place, Space and Evolution. Retrieved 25 May 2015 from <http://www.inclusional-research.org/placespace.php>

Riding, S. (2008) *How do I contribute to the education of myself and others through improving the quality of living educational space? The story of living myself through others as a practitioner-researcher*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Bath. Retrieved 31 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/simonridingphd.shtml>

Sardello, R. (2008) *Silence: The Mystery of Wholeness*. Berkeley: Goldenstone Press.

Schutz, A. (1972). *The phenomenology of the social world*. London: Heinemann.

Whitehead, J. (1976a) *An 11-14 Mixed Ability Project in Science: The Report on a local curriculum Development*. DRAFT March 1976. Retrieved 25 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmaemarch1976all.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (1976b) *Improving Learning for 11-14 Year Olds in Mixed Ability Science Groups*. Final Report August 1976. Retrieved 25 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ilmagall.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1): 41–52. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from <http://actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html>

Whitehead, J. (2013) A living logic for educational research. In: *Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association*, 5th September 2013, University of Sussex. pp. 12. Retrieved 1 April 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera13/jwbera13phil010913.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (2014) Enacting Educational Reflexivity in Supervising Research into Creating living-educational-theories. *Journal Educational Research for Social Change* 3(2); 81-93. Retrieved 25 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwERSC6-2-031014.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (2015) *Developing the research potential of living-posters*. Reflections on the Town Hall Meeting at the Action Research Network of the Americas Conference on 8th May 2015 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in Toronto. Retrieved 26 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwposterpotential.pdf>

Whitehead, J. and Rayner, A. (2009) *From Dialectics to Inclusionality: A naturally inclusive approach to educational accountability*. Retrieved 20 May 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arjwdialtoIncl061109.pdf>