

How could your living-educational-theories from your continuing professional development contribute to enhancing professionalism in education?

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A keynote to the Professional Development Service of Teachers (PDST) meeting of the 11th November 2021.

Summary

This keynote is intended to support the aim and mission of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in providing high quality professional development and support that empowers teachers and schools to provide the best possible education for all pupils/students. It supports the mission of PDST in supporting teachers as reflective practitioners in continuing professional development programmes that support teacher learning, collaboration and evidence-based practice. The mission emphasises: curriculum and pedagogy; learning and teaching methodologies; school improvement and school self-evaluation; school leadership, culture and leading learning; pupil/student and teacher welfare; information and communications technology. The presentation focuses on a proposal to continue to develop the PDST Self-Study Action Research project through the generation and sharing of the living-educational-theories of practitioner-researchers. A living-educational-theory is an individual, practitioner-researcher's explanation of their educational influences in their own learning in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that include practice and understandings.

Context

The proposal is a development from the work of the PDST Self-Study Action Research (SSAR) project. It is focused on strengthening a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development. The graphic below represents the various elements of PDST SSAR approach. This involves critical engagement with literature, the support of a knowledgeable other, critical dialogue with peers, written reflection on practice and the public sharing of work. These are key elements of being 'professional' and integral to Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development.



This process begins with the uncovering of values - ontological, epistemological and methodological. These values are those which underpin our practices. The purpose for uncovering these values is to identify instances where our practice may not reflect our values and thus they find themselves in a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 1989).

While the focus is on the self, advisors are encouraged to use a variety of reflective models (e.g. Rolfe et al.,2001; Brookfield, 1995;2016) in order to generate their own living theory to explain their educative influence on the social formations within which they live and work. They engage with the following questions during the process:

- *Which aspect of my practice do I wish to enhance?*
- *Why is this aspect of my practice important?*
- *How can I modify my practice in light of what I might uncover?*

Participants have submitted a report (1500 - 2000 words approximately) at the end of the process. The purpose of the report is to capture the learning from the project in order to share the learning within the organisation. Sample headings included:

- Introduction (Values statement & Research Question)
- Data Gathering & Ethics (Description about use of - Reflective Diary, Critical Friend, Discussions with teachers, Presentations & Input Discussions, etc...)
- Reflection & Analysis
- Conclusions (Next Steps for my practice, recommended reading, References)
- **Note:** Engagement with Literature should be included either as a section or permeating throughout.

Using the above headings, with the addition of action planning and actions, I shall outline how they can be used to strengthen a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development. This includes deepening and extending learning on how to improve practice and to contribute your living-educational-theory to the professional knowledge-base of education.

Introduction (Values statement & Research Question)

I first asked my research question, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ in my first class, teaching science in a comprehensive school in London in September 1967. The question, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ in preparing for this keynote presentation at PDST in November 2021, might appear to be the same question I asked in 1967. It is however a very different question. The ‘I’ is now my 77 year old ‘I’, rather than my 23 year old ‘I’, with all the learning that has taken place over those 54 years. It includes the continuing deepening and

extending of my understandings of the influences of the sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts in my practice and understandings.

The values I use to judge improvements have also extended and deepened over those 54 years. What has remained the same is the insight that clarifying and communicating the meanings of my values emerges through time and practice and that the constellation of values is unique to me. In other words, the meanings of values are not communicated only through words alone. The embodied expressions of the meanings of values often requires digital visual data to communicate the meanings as they emerge through practice.

The meaning of what I am doing has also changed. I began with a focus on improving my practice in helping my pupils develop their scientific understandings. What I am doing is now focused on extending the educational influences of Living Educational Theory Research as a global social movement with values of human flourishing. I relate my unique constellation of values to the values of the International Co-operative Alliance at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/coop/coopvalues.pdf>

Action Planning and Actions

I began teaching in 1967 having been influenced by John Dewey's ideas on my initial teacher education programme in the Department of Education at the University of Newcastle. From Dewey's pragmatism I recognised that I used action-reflection cycles of expressing concerns when values were not being lived as fully as I believed they could be; generating ideas on how to improve my practice and choosing an action plan; acting and gathering data to make a judgement on the effectiveness of my actions; evaluating the effectiveness of my actions in terms of living my values as fully as I can; modifying my concerns, plans and actions in the light of my evaluations. You can access a copy of the Living Educational Theory, Action-Reflection Cycle, I continue to use in my educational inquiries at: <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arlivingtheoryplanner.pdf>

Data Gathering & Ethics (Description about use of - Reflective Diary, Critical Friend, (Discussions with teachers, Presentations & Input Discussions, etc...)

A Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development recommends the use of any methods of data collection that is useful in generating a valid, evidence-based explanation of educational influences in one's own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings. The emphasise on 'educational influences in learning' is important. Not all learning is educational. Sometimes cultural influences in the learning of individuals have supported the inhumane treatment of some individuals by others and supported crimes against humanity. Hence the stress on educational influences including learning with values of human flourishing.

For example, you could use your report from the Self-Study Action Research Project as data in developing an evidence-based explanation of your educational influences in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence your practice and understandings.

You could include your data and any previous publications in a living-poster to share insights about your research. A living-posters is useful in gathering and sharing information on your research and can be a first stage in generating your own living-educational-theory. You can access guidance on producing and sharing a living-poster at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2021.pdf>. This homepage of living-posters will give you some idea of communities of Living Educational Theory researchers around the world who are sharing their living-educational-theories from their continuing professional development. For example, you could access the Network of Educational Action Research in Ireland (NEARI) at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/neari21.pdf> and follow up the publications of the NEARI convenors, Mairin Glenn, Mary Roche, Bernie Sullivan and Caitriona McDonagh and the details of the Values-Based Practitioner Action Research (VPAR) Special Interest Group of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI).

The poster features a central yellow oval with the text "NEARI" in blue. Radiating from this oval are numerous colorful lines in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue, creating a sunburst effect. The background is a light yellow. Text is arranged around the central graphic.

Use 'back key' to return to living-posters home page

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We offer a safe space for practitioner researchers to share and discuss their research and resources in a supportive and critically reflective environment – online and face to face

NEARI CONVENORS
Máirín Glenn
Mary Roche
Bernie Sullivan
Caitriona McDonagh

VPAR: SIG with ESAI of ESAI SIGs

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The use of digital visual data from one's professional practice can help to clarify and communicate the meanings of the embodied values that are expressed in the practice and can form the explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. When you experience values such as freedom and justice being denied in your practice these are values that you can use as explanatory principles in your explanation of your educational

influences in learning as you explore the implications of asking, researching and answering your question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

See:

Whitehead, J. (2011) multi-media narratives for research into the influences of educational leadership and professional learning. Presentation at a Staff Seminar at Bath Spa University on the 7th June 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwbathspa070611opt.pdf>

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2006) How are we co-creating living standards of judgement in action-researching our professional practices? Multi-media text presented at the World Congress of ALARPM and PAR 21-24 August 2006 in Groningen. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmh06ALARPMmulti.pdf>

In relation to ethics I advocate conforming to the ethical guidelines for educational research from the British Educational Research Association:

British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition, London.

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-%20%20guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>

Reflection & Analysis

The reflections in the Abstract for the following paper are still relevant today in justifying the use of a Living Educational Theory research approach to the continuing professional development of teachers, in enhancing professionalism in education:

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2016) Creating a Profession of Educators with the living-theories of Master and Doctor Educators, *Gifted Education International*, 32(1) 6-25. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei2015/jwmh.pdf>

Whitehead & Huxtable (2013) have presented an argument for teachers to engage in Living Educational Theory research as Continuing Professional Development. They demonstrate how this can empower educators to improve their practice and generate knowledge that contributes to the creation of a profession of educators. They distinguish Living Educational Theory Research from a living-educational-theory. Living Educational Theory Research refers to the conceptual principles that distinguish the research approach. A living-educational-theory is a values-based explanation offered by an individual of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations (Whitehead, 1989).

They argued that for this knowledge to be legitimated by universities, in the form of accredited awards, an extension and transformation will be required in the dominating forms of knowledge. They also argue that educators, who are teaching on continuing professional development programmes, need to develop their talents, knowledge and expertise by researching their own practice in the same way as the teachers they are supporting. In doing

so they exemplify an educational pedagogy that provides evidence-based explanations of their educational influences in learning.

If you decide to develop this approach to your own continuing professional development, you may find it enhances the validity of your explanations of your educational influences in learning to benefit from the mutual rational controls of critical discussion in validation groups of some 3-8 peers. In this approach to enhancing the validity of explanations of educational influences in learning, the explanations are subjected to the following questions in a validation group:

How could I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?

How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify the claims I make in my explanations?

How could I deepen and extend my sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings of their influence in my explanations?

How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in the sense of showing that I was living my values as fully as possible?

In analysing one's educational influence in the learning of others, especially one's pupils or students, it helps to be able to demonstrate how one's responses have influenced pupils' or students' learning. Three analyses that demonstrate how this has been done well are:

Bognar, B. & Zovko, M. (2008) Pupils as action researchers: improving something important in our lives. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 1(1); 1-49. Retrieved from <https://ejolts.net/node/82>

Mounter, J. (2008) Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory? MA assignment on Understanding Learning and Learners assignment, University of Bath. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (2015) Notes for Jack Whitehead's contribution to the posthumous postgraduate award ceremony for Sally Cartwright at the University of Bath on the 14th April 2015. 'Sally Cartwright - Master Educator'. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/sallycartwrightmastereducatorjw140415.pdf>

Conclusions (Next Steps for my practice, recommended reading, References)

The focus of this presentation has been on the question, 'How could your living-educational-theories from your continuing professional development contribute to enhancing professionalism in education?' I have provided evidence from a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development, that focuses on enhancing the flow of values of human flourishing in the generation and sharing of living-educational-theories. At the heart of this approach is a willingness to ask, research and answer your 'I' questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice?'

At the end of the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Self-Study Action Research (PDST/SSAR) project, participants were asked to submit a report of some 1500 -

2000 words in order to capture the learning from the project and to share the learning within the organisation.

I am suggesting that these reports could form the basis for sharing, in wider, local, national and international forums, the educational knowledge you are creating in your continuing professional development. My own passion for supporting the sharing as widely as possible this educational knowledge is because of its grounding in values of human flourishing. Here are some of the forums I have contributed to myself and I do urge you to share the educational knowledge you are generating if you haven't already done so:

The Professional Development Service for Teachers; The Network Educational Action Research Ireland; The Educational Studies Association of Ireland, The Special Interest Group of ESAI on Values-based Practitioner Research; The International Professional Development Association; The Association of Teacher Education in Europe; The British Educational Research Association and The American Educational Research Association.

- **A note from the Network Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI):**

Begin forwarded message:

From: NEARI people <info@eari.ie>
Subject: Notes from NEARIMeet October 2021
Date: 9 November 2021 at 13:00:00 GMT
To: undisclosed-recipients;

Dear colleagues,

The notes and video clips from our NEARIMeet in October are available on the NEARI website now at <https://www.eari.ie/2021/11/06/notes-from-nearimeet-8-october-2021/>

We hope you enjoy them. Thank you to all who participated and contributed to the learning adventure!

We look forward to meeting you at the Winter NEARIMeet, which will take place in January 2022.

Best wishes,

Bernie, Caitriona, Cornelia, Máirín and Mary

[Network of Educational Action Research in Ireland](#) (NEARI)



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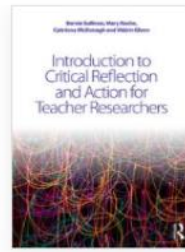
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Enhancing Practice through Classroom Research
A Teacher's Guide to Professional Development, 2nd Edition

By **Caitriona McDonagh, Mary Roche, Bernie Sullivan, Máirín Glenn**

Paperback – 2019-08-12
Routledge

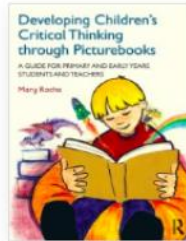


Introduction to Critical Reflection and Action for Teacher Researchers

1st Edition

By **Bernie Sullivan, Máirín Glenn, Mary Roche, Caitriona McDonagh**

Paperback – 2016-04-28
Routledge



Developing Children's Critical Thinking through Picturebooks

A guide for primary and early years students and teachers, 1st Edition

By **Mary Roche**

Paperback – 2014-06-22
Routledge



Enhancing Practice through Classroom Research

A teacher's guide to professional development, 1st Edition

By **Caitriona McDonagh, Mary Roche, Bernie Sullivan, Máirín Glenn**

Paperback – 2011-11-03
Routledge



Learning Communities in Educational Partnerships
Action Research as Transformation

By **Máirín Glenn, Mary Roche, Caitriona McDonagh and Bernie Sullivan**

Published: 16-11-2017
Imprint: Bloomsbury Academic

- The Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI).

<http://esai.ie/> ESAI Conference 2022: Call for Proposals on Reconstructing Education: what matters? 7-9 April 2022

See the Values Based Practitioner Action Research (VPAR) ESAI Special Interest Group at <http://www.eari.ie/values-based-practitioner-action-research-vpar-esai-special-interest-group/>

- The International Professional Development Association (IPDA).

<https://ipda.org.uk/ipda-international-conference/conference2021/> The theme of the 2021 conference will explore marginalised voices in contemporary times. Addressing inequities through professional learning and education.

See also:

Colman, J., Huxtable, M., Whitehead, J. (2020) Symposium on, 'Post-professional Identities, ethics and response-ability beyond professional standards', at the International Professional Development Association (IPDA) Virtual Conference on, 'Imagining the post-professional: Identity, ethics and response-ability beyond professional standards.' 28th November 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ipda2020/ipda2020symposium.pdf>

Whitehead, J. (2020) The identity, ethics and response-ability of an educator with and beyond professional standards and with values of living-global-citizenship, human flourishing and Living Educational Theory research. Presented at the International Professional Development Association (IPDA) Virtual Conference on, 'Imagining the post-professional: Identity, ethics and response-ability beyond professional standards.' 27th November 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ipda2020/jw2020ipdaindividual.pdf>

- The Association of Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE).

<https://atee.education>

Whitehead, J. (2021) 'Enhancing Professionalism in Education Through Living Educational Theory Research' on the 9th September 2021 to the Association of Teacher Education in Europe, Annual Conference. Retrieved from

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jack2021atee090921.pdf>

- The British Educational Research Association (BERA).

<https://www.bera.ac.uk>

See Whitehead's Presidential Address to BERA:

Whitehead, J. (1989) How do we Improve Research-based Professionalism in Education? A question which includes action research, educational theory and the politics of educational knowledge. : 1988 Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association. Published in the British Educational Research Journal, 15(1); 3-17. Retrieved from

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jwberapres.html>

- The American Educational Research Association (AERA).

<https://www.aera.net/> See:

Delong, J., Whitehead, J., Dhungana, P., Vaughan, M. and Rawal, S. (2021) Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry. Successful proposal for a session presentation at the April 2022 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century, in San Diego, California. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/aera2022sessionprop.pdf>

Delong, J., Whitehead, J., Mishra, S., Vaughan, M. and Dhungana, P. (2021). A symposium presentation at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Accepting Responsibility. Retrieved from

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>

Note: Engagement with Literature is included either as permeating throughout the generation of a living-educational-theory.

References

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- Colman, J., Huxtable, M., Whitehead, J. (2020) Symposium on, 'Post-professional Identities, ethics and response-ability beyond professional standards', at the International Professional Development Association (IPDA) Virtual Conference on, 'Imagining the post-professional: Identity, ethics and response-ability beyond professional standards.' 28th November 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ipda2020/ipda2020symposium.pdf>
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