Enhancing educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to Pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education.

Mary Huxtable, University of Cumbria.
Jack Whitehead, University of Cumbria.

Abstract

The last 20 years have seen a growing interest in researching pedagogy in Higher Education with action researchers playing a part in this growth. However, there are few studies that analyse the educational influences in learning of the action researcher in their own pedagogy in Higher Education. Hence the focus of this paper on enhancing educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education. This paper presents an analysis of such educational influences. The analysis explains our educational influences in the learning of students who have progressed from the springboard provided by Action Research to recognising and valuing themselves as knowledge creating researchers who are contributing to a global knowledgebase. The analysis draws on data from supervising and tutoring successfully completed masters and doctoral programmes of professional development with teachers and other professional educational-practitioners.

The meanings of educational practice, educational influences in learning, educational pedagogy and educational research are clarified. In the discussion we show how a Living Theory approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education enables students to engage in the highest levels of learning, creating and contributing knowledge with values that carry hope for human flourishing.

Introduction

The paper is divided into three sections on: 1) issues of epistemology, methodology and methods; 2) data collection and analysis; 3) tensions and ethical issues in Living Theory research. We make an important distinction between a living-educational-theory and Living Theory research. A living-educational-theory (Whitehead, 1989) is an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding. Living Theory research refers to the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation that enable a researcher to locate their practice within this approach to research. In traditional research explanations of the behaviour and influences of individuals are derived from the general concepts of a theory. In Living Theory research an explanation of educational influence is generated (and not derived) from enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and includes insights from traditional theories. We clarify and justify these values within the paper because the explanations of educational influence in Living Theory research include values that carry hope for human flourishing.

We are also aware of making the following distinctions between pedagogical Action Research, Self-study research, Practitioner-research and Living Theory research. We use Norton's (2020, 1) definition of pedagogical Action Research as 'systematically investigating your own teaching and assessment practice and/or your students' learning (often the two

cannot be separated).' We agree with Norton that this kind of research has the aim of contributing to both theoretical knowledge and to improving practice. We see such research as involving enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. We recognise that such enquiries are forms of both Self-study and Practitioner research because of the centrality of the 'I' in such practical questions. However, in our enquiries into enhancing educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education, we include the generation and sharing of the individual 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 influence practice and understanding with values that carry hope for human flourishing.

In Section One, on issues of epistemology, methodology and methods, we begin by clarifying our meaning of educational practice, educational influences in learning and educational pedagogy and distinguishing between education and educational research. We clarify the nature of the research we engage in to understand, improve and explain our educational practice and contribute to the evolution of a global educational knowledgebase. The values that form our explanatory principles carry hope for human flourishing. We describe our educational research methodology and the research methods, which enable us to research our educational practice.

In Section Two, we show how data can be collected and analysed as we ask, research and answer our questions, 'how do we improve our practice as Higher Education research supervisors and course tutors?'. We draw on this data as we, individually and together, supervised doctoral students and tutored Master's Degree programmes, to justify our claim to have had an educational influence in learning and to demonstrate the transformational power of a Living Theory approach to developing an educational pedagogy in Higher Education. The transformational power is focused on the responsibility of a professional educator in Higher Education to research their own practice in order to both improve it and to contribute to the professional knowledgebase. We clarify meanings of values that carry hope for human flourishing as they emerge in the course of the research.

We take the reader from how Action Research provided a springboard for many students in their enquiries, 'How do I improve my professional practice?', to recognise and value themselves as knowledge creating researchers. In our pedagogical Action Research we express our concerns and imagine possibilities for improvement. We create an action plan, act and gather data to make an evidence-based judgement of our influence and evaluate our actions in terms of the effectiveness of our actions in improving our practice in terms of our values. We encourage our students to do the same. As they do this we encourage them to see themselves as knowledge creators as they develop valid explanations for their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations they worked and lived in. The knowledge they have generated has been legitimated by the Academy and is contributing to the growth of a global educational knowledgebase that is drawn on by educational-practitioners working in diverse contexts, fields of practice and academic disciplines. For example, the University of Kathmandu in Nepal has legitimated the doctorate of Qutoshi's (2016) on, Creating Living-Educational-Theory: A Journey Towards Transformative Teacher Education in Pakistan. The most recent example of the educational influence of our Living Theory approach is acknowledged by Jones in her thesis, 'My living-theory of inclusive and inclusional empowerment: A Living Theory approach' (Jones, 2019). Jones created the first Living Theory thesis to be awarded a doctorate by Liverpool Hope University, UK. The Universities of Lancaster and Cumbria in the UK have legitimated Briganti's (2020) doctoral thesis on 'My living-theory of International Development'.

Finally, in Section Three we discuss the tensions and ethical issues concerned with supervisors and tutors researching to understand, improve and explain their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of their students. The discussions include the tensions that can arise in supporting students to engage in forms of research, which may be taken as a challenge to orthodoxies within and between disciplines. The discussion is based on the assumption that supervisors and tutors are concerned with realising as fully as they can their educational responsibilities towards their students taking into account the various power relations at work in educational practices within institutions. At the same time they need to keep in clear focus their distinct organisational and professional responsibilities as supervisors and tutors employed by a Higher Education organisation. We are claiming that Higher Education educational professionals should make their own contributions to an educational knowledgebase through creating and sharing their own living-educational-theories. We conclude with an invitation to those developing their pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education to explore the transformational possibilities (Wood, 2010) in both practice and theory that adopting a Living Theory research approach offers them.

Section 1. Issues of epistemology, methodology and methods

Norton (2009) has done a great deal to develop pedagogical research in Higher Education. Like Norton, we acknowledge that university contexts often privilege subject research. We share Norton's advocacy of pedagogical Action Research as a practical and pragmatic approach to the pressures on university academics to be excellent teachers, reflective practitioners, to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) and to be research active. However, we do not agree with Norton (2009, 64) when she places Living Theory research at an extreme position on a positivism-interpretive dimension, claiming it does not reflect the capacity of educational action to embrace the 'rich middle ground'. Our pedagogical research in Higher Education is grounded in a view of professionalism that includes the professional educator making a contribution to the professional knowledgebase of education, through generating and sharing valid accounts of their living-educational-theory research. We believe that engaging in Living Theory research is a necessary part of fulfilling the responsibilities of a professional educator in Higher Education, rather than being an extreme position.

Whitehead (1989) coined the idea of a living-educational-theory being an individual's explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations. This was because he could not derive a valid explanation of these influences from the disciplines of education, either individually or in any combination. Insights from the disciplines of education are useful in the generation of a living-educational-theory. However, Whitehead (1989) argued that the disciplines approach was mistaken. Hirst (1983, 18), one of the main proponents of this approach, acknowledged the mistake:

> In many characterisations of educational theory, my own included, principles justified in this way have until recently been regarded as at best pragmatic maxims having a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more fundamental, theoretical justification. That now seems to me to be a mistake. Rationally defensible practical principles, I suggest, must of their nature stand up to such practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate.

We distinguish educational research from education research in that educational research includes the explanations that individual's produce for their educational influences in learning. Education research is research carried out from within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of disciplines of education.

We make a distinction between Living Theory research and a living-educational-theory. In traditional understandings of a 'theory', a theory is understood as a general conceptual framework and an explanation for the behaviour of an individual is derived from the conceptual framework. A living-educational-theory is generated by the individual to explain their educational influences in learning and cannot be 'derived' from a general conceptual framework. The idea of Living Theory research as a conceptual framework is not to provide an explanatory framework to explain an individual's educational influences in learning. It is to enable a living-educational-theory researcher to identify the approach to research in which individuals are generating and sharing their explanations within Living Theory research.

In this paper we offer an evidence-based explanation of our Living Theory research into enhancing our educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to Pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education. The evidence is drawn from data provided by masters and doctoral students we have tutored and supervised to the successful completion of their Higher Degrees as part of their programme of continuing professional development. Our explanations of the educational influences in learning of our pedagogical Action Research are focused on: the inclusion of 'I' in explanations of educational influence in learning; the clarification and use of embodied expressions of values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning; the generation of validated, evidence-based explanations of the researcher of their living-educational-theory

We understand that a profession has a knowledgebase that has received academic legitimation. Initiation into a profession involves learning relevant aspects of that knowledgebase and learning to create and contribute knowledge to that knowledgebase. We are claiming, in developing a Higher Education educational pedagogy, that being a professional educator in Higher Education also involves contributing to this knowledgebase through the academic legitimation of the living-educational-theory of an educator. This theory is a validated explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding.

We are making a distinction between Higher Education provided by institutions such as universities, and adult education. The aims of adult education are, we are claiming, drawing on Reiss & White (2013, 1), a life-long personal venture of learning:

- o to lead a life that is personally flourishing and
- o to help others to do so, too.

An educator in Higher Education, adopting a Living Theory pedagogical approach, positions students not as passive learners but as active partners in generating knowledge to their own benefit and that of others. Our first claim is that the paper pushes the boundaries of Higher Education pedagogy through overtly identifying students as partners in educational knowledge generation. In justifying this claim we will clarify what we mean by 'students as

partners in educational knowledge creation', which is integral to developing educational pedagogy in Higher Education.

We have developed our educational pedagogy in Higher Education researching with students engaged in masters and doctoral enquiries, as partners in educational knowledge generation. Our students generally have more than five years, and some have as many as 30 years, experience as professional practitioners. They work in various countries and cultures around the world and the fields of their professional practices are diverse, for instance, they include International Development, Health, Business, and Education. In developing our educational pedagogy in Higher Education we are concerned with making public our students' knowledge in a way that can be accredited as a contribution to a global educational knowledgebase and the knowledgebases drawn on by practitioners in their field of practice.

Our partnerships with our students are focused on a shared interest in this accreditation. We understand a partnership to be an arrangement where parties known as partners agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. Whilst our mutual interest in accreditation is what has brought us together we also have a mutual interest in developing our individual and collective educational influences in learning and creating educational knowledge. We understand the following difference that the partners contribute to realising the goals of accreditation and educational-knowledge creation. The practitioners contribute their embodied knowledge created during their years of experience as professionals in their field of practice and their years engaged in adult education. We contribute our expertise as professional educators supporting students to successfully achieve accreditation, enhance their educational learning and make public valid accounts of the educational-knowledge they create as a contribution to a global educational knowledgebase. Our students are partners with us as they study to gain accreditation and generate educational knowledge.

As our students are mostly practitioner-researchers who have well over five years of experience as professional practitioners they already embody the basic professional knowledge that has enabled them to be judged as professionally competent. As well as extending their field practice, knowledge and skill, some realise the importance of including, in their continuing professional development programme, a form of self-study educational practitioner research in which they generate their living-educational-theories. This involves researching their practice in order to understand and improve it through asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. Judging changes as improvements involves the clarification of the values that form their embodied explanatory principles and the standards by which they wish to be held accountable. These standards include those of the organisation or community, within which they work.

At the heart of a Living Theory research approach to developing educational pedagogy in Higher Education is the assumption that students, research supervisors and course tutors are all educational knowledge-creators. Our Living Theory research approach to developing educational pedagogy in Higher Education rests on the recognition of our pedagogy as a form of educational practice. We distinguish an educational practice from other forms of practice because it involves learning with values that carry hope for human flourishing. We distinguish the learning we are referring to as educational, as not all learning is educational. History is full of examples where the learning of individuals and nations has negated the values of the flourishing of humanity. As we both grew up in post war Britain we are particularly conscious of the way some forms of learning negated these values in much of Europe between 1939-1945. Bronowski (1973), broadcasting an episode of *The Ascent of*

Man, at the gates of a concentration camp, made this point very clearly when he pointed out that the learning of engineers who improved the lifts in Auschwitz taking bodies to the gas chambers, did not include values that carried hope for human flourishing.

As Living Theory researchers we have clarified the meanings of the constellation of values that carry, for us, hope for human flourishing and opened these values and explanations for public criticism. Huxtable's (2012) constellation of values emerged as she researched her practice to enhance children and young persons' abilities to learn to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life, for themselves and others. In the course of her research she clarifies and communicates her ontological values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, and her social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society. Whitehead (2019) has also clarified and communicated his unique constellation of values of living global citizenship that he claims carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

The idea of 'educational influences in learning' is of fundamental importance in the generation of a living-educational-theory and therefore in a Living Theory research approach to Higher Education pedagogy. It is important because it focuses on differences between influence, effect and impact. Effect and impact tend to focus on causal or statistical relationships of the kind 'if this then that' or 'if this then the probability is that this will happen'. A focus on 'impact' also tends to lead to an oversimplification of the complex business of humans learning and the learning that is educational. By contrast, we claim that to have an educational influence in learning is more nuanced and includes the idea of an intentional relationship, rather than causal relationship, of an educator with the learner that is open to the learner's imaginative response to what they are learning and the knowledge they are creating as a consequence. In clarifying what we mean by an 'educational' influence in learning, we have already made a clear distinction between education and educational research and explained the significance of this distinction for pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education.

In our experience of university research committees, they usually require statements of the methodology and methods to be used in the research in the initial proposal. One of the difficulties, this presents a Living Theory researcher with, is that they generate their living-educational-theory methodology in the course of generating their validated explanation of their educational influences in learning. For this reason the Living Theory researcher cannot pre-specify a methodology that they are 'applying' in their research. What they can do is to indicate the 'hallmarks' by which their methodology can be recognised as being a Living Theory research methodology. They can clarify for examiners of their research proposal that in asking, researching and answering a question of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' they are likely to draw insights from a range of methodologies as their research progresses. Living Theory researchers commonly draw on one or more of the following: Narrative Inquiry; Self-Study Practitioner Research; Action Research, Autoethnography and Phenomenology as they create their own living-educational-theory methodology.

We understand a research method as a technique that is used to gather data and to test the validity of an explanation. One research method often used to clarify the meanings of embodied expressions of relational values in Living Theory is a process of empathetic resonance using digital technologies with digital visual data. This data, whilst being used in multimedia narratives, cannot be included in a purely print-based medium such as this paper (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2010). This point about multimedia narratives, using digital visual

data, is not to deny the importance of traditional forms of data in generating a living-educational-theory. It is to emphasise that digital visual data are particularly useful in clarifying the meanings of the expressions of embodied values and embodied knowledge as these emerge through practice.

In any research it is important to ensure, as far as possible, the validity of the knowledge-claims. In Living Theory research the draft claims to educational knowledge are subjected to rigorous validation processes during the research as well as when an account is being prepared as a contribution to a knowledgebase. Ideas from Popper (1975) and Habermas (1976) are drawn on to test the validity of the claims and to improve the explanatory power of the research. We use Popper's insight that objectivity rests in inter-subjective testing. In establishing validation groups for enhancing the validity of living-educational-theories we use Popper's (1975, 44) idea of the 'mutual rational control by critical discussion'. We integrate the mutual rational control by critical discussion, with Habermas' four criteria of social validity, in validation groups that provide a context for a creative, as well as challenging, educational conversation about the research. In the validation groups of some 3-8 peers we encourage Living Theory researchers to submit their explanations of educational influences in learning to the mutual rational control of critical discussions that include responding to question such as:

i) How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation of educational influences in learning?
ii) How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my claims to knowledge in my explanation of educational influences in learning?
iii) How can I deepen and/or extend my socio-historical and socio-cultural understandings of their influences in my explanations of educational influences in learning? This is related to Habermas' idea of a recognized normative background. A Living Theory research is expected to include an understanding of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences that constitute the normative influences in the research.
iv) How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in showing that I am living the values I claim to hold as fully as possible in my explanation of educational influences in learning? This criterion is included to avoid Shroyer's (1973) critique of Heidegger that the 'I' remains formal whilst pretending that it contains content in itself. (Whitehead, 2019, 11)

We also encourage the use of notions of rigour. In 1995 a group of Whitehead's doctoral researchers encouraged him to produce what they called, '*The Advanced Bluffers Guide For Educational Action Researchers For Improving The Quality Of Professional Practice And Creating Living Educational Theories For Cultural Renewal*' (Whitehead, 1995). In the third cycle, on Action Research, Relevance, Rigour and Validity, Kok (ibid. 76-82) explains how to improve the rigour of research drawing on Winter's (1989) six criteria of rigour: dialectical and reflexive critique; plural structure; multiple resource; risk; theory practice transformation.

Our pedagogical research in Higher Education is focused on continually researching our educational practice to learn how we can improve it, and to generate valid accounts of our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of masters and doctoral researchers and in the learning of social formations. We exemplify what we have been talking about in the next section.

Section 2. Data, analysis and results

In this section, we draw on data collected as we, individually and together, supervised doctoral students and tutored masters degree programmes from our Living Theory perspective. From this perspective we justify our claim to have had an educational influence in our students' learning through their inclusion of 'I' and their values in their action reflection cycles within their explanations of their educational influences. Our students demonstrate the transformational power of our Higher Education educational pedagogy in generating valid, evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning. This is what we mean in our claim that our students progress from the springboard provided by Action Research to recognising and valuing themselves as knowledge creating researchers in their living-educational-theories.

Eames (1995), Cartwright (2010) and Mounter (2012) have explored the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'. Data from the masters and doctoral research programmes that have been accredited by the University of Bath, UK, are drawn on as evidence to support our claims about our pedagogical influences in the learning of professional educators on their Continuing Professional Development programmes. The claims are focused on the inclusion of 'I' in research questions and in the focus on the educational influences of the professional educator in their own learning and in the learning of their students. Our Living Theory perspective informs our educational pedagogy in Higher Education in that we are seeking to influence our students to generate their own living-educational-theories. What we mean by this perspective is:

i)   That it presents a valid explanation of the individual's educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding.

ii) That the values that are being used as explanatory principles and evaluative standards are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice.

iii) That the draft explanations have been subjected to the mutual rational control of critical discussions in validation groups of between 3-8 peers (numbers not crucial) in which responses have been given in relation to the questions:

    a. How could I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?

    b. How could I strengthen the evidence I present to justify my contributions to knowledge?

    c. How could I deepen and extend the sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of their influence in my explanation? [ ] [SEP]

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

iv) That the explanation of educational influence in learning draws insights from the relevant theories of others.

v)   The methodology and methods draw insights from the methodologies and methods of others, such as narrative inquiry, autoethnography and action-reflection cycles in the generation of the living-theory-methodology that emerges in the course of generation a living-educational-theory.

We present the following extracts and titles from our students' accredited work to illustrate their progression from using action-reflection cycles, from Action Research, in answering the 'How' question of 'How do I improve my professional practice?' to seeing themselves as knowledge creating researchers in the generation and sharing of their living-educational-

theories as their explanations of educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and in the learning of social formations that influence practice and understandings.

To emphasise the potential of the approach, to enhancing an educational pedagogy in Higher Education, the analysis below concludes with references to two contributions to educational knowledge. The first is an analysis of how professionalism in education has been enhanced through this pedagogical approach in supporting the accreditation of doctoral and masters programmes (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016). The second is the contribution one of our students is making to extending pedagogy in Higher Education in the form of the 'Values-led Leadership MA programme from a Living Theory perspective', developed by Mounter (2019) of the Learning Institute in Cornwall (UK) and Legitimated by Newman University, Birmingham (UK).

Whitehead's explanation of the educational influence of his pedagogy in Higher Education in supervising a doctoral degree.

Data from Eames' (1995) doctoral thesis 'How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge', illustrates one of the difficulties of representing our analysis of our educational influences in learning in our Higher Education Pedagogy. The dialogical form of the data (Eames, 1995, Chapter 7, 1-38) highlights one of our pedagogical issues in enabling our doctoral and masters students to generate their own living-educational-theories. For example, Eames chose to continue his professional development in this way and the knowledge he generated earned him both his MPhil and his PhD.

Just extracting the quotes below from the thesis cannot do justice to the quality of Eames' analysis of Whitehead's educational influence in his pedagogy in Eames' Higher Education. What the quotes can point towards is that Whitehead's educational influence is being expressed from within a dialogical form of pedagogy as Eames experiences himself as a living contradiction and continues to generate his own living-educational-theory in his doctoral thesis. At the beginning of the dialogue Eames describes his experience of being a living contradiction in presenting his dialectical view of educational knowledge from within a propositional form. As he was giving the presentation he realised the contradiction in what he was doing. In the extract from our dialogues below,

Eames is acknowledging his learning about educational knowledge together with Whitehead's educational influence in his learning:

> *Jack: For me, even the term 'dialogue' is getting in the way. There's something beneath the notion of dialogue, which was something to do with what we were saying about taking risks, about revealing who you feel yourself to be. So remember to be careful about using a term to communicate - which doesn't enable you to communicate, as directly as you can the meaning of the experiences you have had. And if you can take today, and the one on Tuesday, you'd be very close to presenting that process in action... You'd help people to get on the inside of that process of change and development which is educational and constitutes educational knowledge.*
>
> **Kevin's Comment.** *This extract came towards the end of the third conversation, and shows how, as a consequence of what I had learnt over those few days in December, I was able to make a clearer formulation than previously of the way educational*

knowledge is shaped. It develops over time; it happens through dialogues within a community; there's a tentativeness about it, and an openness to the thoughts of others about what you're saying to them......

Jack was right to challenge my use of 'framework'. What I meant was some kind of supporting device, which gives order to the way in which educational knowledge develops, for it is not haphazard or incoherent. However, I accept Jack's point that the notion of a framework is too 'limiting', in that it has a mechanistic quality that doesn't fit with the 'openness' of what I am trying to describe. I am happier with my reformulation - 'shape of rationality' - in that I believe what I am trying to describe is a process with particular qualities. It's not hard-edged, but it has form. It's also not random or chaotic, but is intelligently systematic. It's the way educators understand, communicate and take action.

Jack made the point, also, that I should beware of letting the terms I use get in the way of communicating 'as directly as I can the meaning of the experiences I have had.' I will bear that in mind, while also trying to cope with what I've learnt on the whole journey.

In his doctoral thesis Eames describes and explains his own professional learning in coming to a transformed understanding of the nature of a dialectical form of educational knowledge. In the dialogues Eames acknowledges Whitehead's educational influence in his learning as he generates his explanation of his professional learning using, as explanatory principles, the values he uses to give meaning and purpose to his work as a professional educator.

Our (Huxtable's and Whitehead's) pedagogies include the specialised knowledge that you would expect of research supervisors. We have extensive knowledge of research methods and methodologies and specialised knowledge of Living Theory research. In our pedagogies we enable our students to research the educational implications of experiencing themselves as a living-contradiction.

Eames describes his experience of being a living contradiction as he attempts to describe the dialectical nature of his educational knowledge from within a propositional form that denies the existence of contradiction in correct thought. Eames addresses his experience of being a living contradiction, using action reflection cycles to resolve the contradiction and improve his practice. He presented his work to a research group and gave the following explanation for abandoning his presentation:

As I was giving the presentation, the conviction that there was something wrong grew on me. I became increasingly aware that what I was saying missed the richness of the evidence I had been looking at ...... The OHTs [Over Head Transparencies] (like the ones immediately above) were abstract, dessicated, lifeless - the opposite of what I felt (and had stated explicitly in the earlier chapters) that a dialectical process should be. So I stopped. I said:

> *The meaning of what I'm trying to sketch out cannot be contained within the propositional form of some guy standing in front of a machine and putting pictures on to a piece of paper. I suppose I was using a propositional form, but I feel that it's a most inadequate account of it so far.*

Eames (1995) has provided an explicit and short synopsis of his work in his Abstract to his PhD thesis, 'Action Research, dialectics and an epistemology of practically-based professional knowledge for education':

> *This thesis is an attempt to make an original contribution to educational knowledge through a study of my own professional and educational development in action-research enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' The study includes analyses of my educative relationships in a classroom, educative conversations and correspondences with other teachers and academics. It also integrates the ideas of others from the wider field of knowledge and from dialectical communities of professional educators based at Bath University, Wootton Bassett School and elsewhere. The analyses I make of the resulting challenges to my thinking and practice show how educators in schools can work together, embodying a form of professional knowledge which draws on Thomism and other manifestations of dialectical rationality.*

> *Contributions to educational knowledge are made in relation to educational action research and professional knowledge. The first is concerned with the nature of professional knowledge in education, and how action research can constitute the form of professional knowledge which I see as lacking at present. The second contribution is concerned with how we represent an individual's claim to know their own educational development. These contributions contain an analysis in terms of a dialectical epistemology of professional knowledge, which includes contradiction, negation, transformation and moral responsibility within a dialogical community.*

As Whitehead did with Eames, we (Whitehead and Huxtable) help our students to see themselves as living contradictions when they negate their values in practice. We help them to clarify and communicate the meanings of the values they use to explain their educational influences, in the course of their emergence in practice. We emphasise the importance of strengthening the validity of their explanations through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. We make suggestions, from our knowledge of relevant theories, about the insights that they could integrate into the generation of their own living-educational-theories.

Whilst Whitehead's explanation of the educational influence, in his pedagogy of Higher Education, includes the points above, the explanation is not limited to these points. In supervising a Living Theory doctorate we understand that a doctoral thesis has to make an original contribution to knowledge. Hence, our explanations of educational influence in our pedagogies include a relational dynamic that supports the creativity of the researcher in generating their own explanation of their educational influences in their own learning and in the learning of others. So, at the heart of our pedagogy is the 'humility of the educator' described by Buber (1947, 122): In our Living Theory approach to Higher Education pedagogy we recognise that our students already express the embodied knowledges of professional educators in their practice. As part of our supervision we emphasise the importance of making public and evolving this knowledge in their living-educational-theories. We hope that we are communicating clearly the importance of this recognition as it is at the heart of our pedagogies in supporting the generation of an individual's living-educational-theory. Whilst stressing the value of the use of action-reflection cycles in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' not all Action Research involves the generation of a living-educational-theory. In our pedagogies we stress the nature of crossing a line between Action Research and Living Educational Theory research. The line is

a boundary within which the Action Researcher moves to becoming a Living Educational Theory researcher through generating a valid, evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning. The explanation is a necessary condition of Living Educational Theory research but not of Action Research.

Explaining the educational influence of our pedagogy in Higher Education in Sally Cartwright's professional learning in a master's programme.

Here are the titles of Cartwright's master's units. We believe that our educational influence in our Living Theory approach to Higher Education pedagogy can be seen in Cartwright's use of 'I' and 'my' in the titles of masters unit titles, 2, 4, 5 & 6 below. Our influence can also be seen in Cartwright's focus on justifying her claims to be researching her own practice in 6 below and to be integrating her critical reflections on her own learning into her professional practice in 7 below.

1. GWIST *Accredited Professional Development Programme. Educational Management* – BANES, 2001.
2. *How can I help my students understand and develop the skills of independent learning?* Understanding Learners and Learning MA Unit, 2007.
3. *A Pilot Project: The application of the TASC process across 5 subjects to Year 7 students*. First Educational Enquiry MA Unit, 2008.
4. *How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their own learning?* Gifts and Talents MA Unit, 2008.
5. *How can leadership qualities improve my practice as a teacher?* Second Educational Enquiry MA Unit, 2009.
6. *How can I research my own practice?* Research Methods MA Unit, 2010.
7. *A Critical Reflection On My Learning And Its Integration Into My Professional Practice*. Additional 3 credit Educational Enquiry MA Unit, 2010.

The data above provides evidence to justify our claim that our Higher Education pedagogy influences a student to progress from the use of action reflection cycles in her educational enquiries and other units in 1 to 5 above. The progress is in the recognition and valuing herself as an educational knowledge creator in units 6 and 7 as she researches her own practice and produces a critical reflection on her own learning and integrates these reflections into her professional practice.

Explaining the educational influence of our pedagogy in Higher Education in Joy Mounter's professional learning in a master's programme.

Our pedagogic influences in Mounter's Higher Education can be seen in our joint tutoring of her masters programme. You can access Mounter's writings for her Living Theory Masters in the values-based accounts of her professional learning. As with Cartwright our pedagogical influences can be seen in the inclusion of 'I' and 'my' in the titles and with the focus on enhancing pupils' learning with values that carry hope for human flourishing:

1. *How Can I Live My Personal Theory Of Education In The Classroom To Promote Self Reflection As A Learner?* First Educational Enquiry Unit, 2006.
2. *Language Of Learning To The Language Of Educational Responsibility.* Second Educational Enquiry Unit, 2006.

3. *If I Want The Children In My Class To Extend Their Thinking And Develop Their Own Values And Learning Theories, How Can I Show The Development Of Their Learning? How Do I Research This In My Classroom?* Research Methods Unit, 2007.
4. *How Can I Work Within The Government's Perspective Of 'Gifted And Talented' But Still Remain True To My Own Living Values?* Gifted and Talented Unit, 2008.
5. *'How can I enhance the educational influence of my pupils in their own learning, that of other pupils, myself and the school?'* Third Educational Enquiry Unit, 2008
6. *Can Children Carry Out Action Research About Learning, Creating Their Own Learning Theory?* Understanding Learning and Learners Unit, 2008.
7. *As A Headteacher Researcher How Can I Demonstrate The Impact And Self-Understandings Drawn From Living Theory Action Research, As A Form Of Continual Professional Development In Education?* MA Dissertation, 2012.

As with the data from Cartwright, it provides evidence to justify our claim that our Higher Education pedagogy influences a student to progress from the use of action reflection cycles in her educational enquiries and other units in 1 to 6 above. The progress is in Mounter recognising and valuing herself as an educational knowledge creator in her Masters dissertation in 7 above on, 'As A Headteacher Researcher How Can I Demonstrate The Impact And Self-Understandings Drawn From Living Theory Action Research, As A Form Of Continual Professional Development In Education?'. We have already published a more detailed explanation of the educational influences of our higher educational pedagogy as we contribute to the global professional knowledgebase of professional educators (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016). Mounter's Unit 6 on *Can Children Carry Out Action Research About Learning, Creating Their Own Learning Theory?* is particularly relevant to this paper. Mounter (2008) provides the evidence of her living-theory research with her 6 year old students to ask, research and answer the question.

Mounter (2015) is continuing with her Living Theory research into HE as a doctoral researcher who is working for *The Learning Institute*, Cornwall, UK, with the roles of designated Safeguarding Lead, MA and Leadership Course Leader, Leadership Apprenticeship Lead, Module Tutor Level 4,5,6,7. Her doctoral research includes the curriculum design and pedagogy for a Values-led Leadership MA programme from a Living Theory perspective (Mounter, 2019), legitimated by Newman University, Birmingham, UK. An analysis of Mounter's professional learning is included in our claim to be contributing to the creation of a profession of educators with the living-theories of Master and Doctor Educators (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016).

Section 3. Discussion of tensions and ethical issues in Living Theory research.

We have shown through the data we have presented, together with their use as evidence in our explanations of our educational influences, a Living Theory research approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education. Our explanations have focused on the educational influences of our pedagogies in enabling masters and doctoral students to gain accreditation for their continuing professional development programmes. These educational influences are influenced by the following power relations. We accept that we work within the power relations that upholds the standards of judgment that a University requires to be applied for the award of the masters and doctoral degrees we supervise. We are also aware that our institutional roles as tutors and supervisors carry a differential power relation with our students. As we stated above we follow Buber (1947, 122) in seeking to express the

humility of the educator in reducing the effects of a differential power relation within which we could by guilty of an inappropriate imposition on our students' learning:

> If this educator should ever believe that for the sake of education he has to practise selection and arrangement, then he will be guided by another criterion than that of inclination, however legitimate this may be in its own sphere; he will be guided by the recognition of values which is in his glance as an educator. But even then his selection remains suspended, under constant correction by the special humility of the educator for whom the life and particular being of all his pupils is the decisive factor to which his 'hierarchical' recognition is subordinated.

There is some evidence that students consider themselves as partners in Living Theory research (Mounter, 2008).

Our tutorial and supervisory educational relation involve supporting explorations of the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice?'. Whilst the formal University procedures for the accrediting of these higher degrees involve their validation as making contributions or original contributions to educational knowledge, each living-educational-theory is subjected to the validation procedures outlined in the paper.

For example, the masters and doctoral students we have tutored were all members of cohorts of students who formed validation groups for each other and ourselves. Whitehead (1995) has provided extensive evidence of his use of validation groups with his doctoral students and in his own research, to strengthen the validity of explanations of educational influences in learning. Huxtable (2006) has provided evidence of the influence of a validation group of masters students in justifying her claims about her own continuing professional development:

> I am writing in the context of a conversation through documentation with:
>
> 1. My examiner at the university judging 3,500 – 4,500 words of continuous prose against criterion shown in appendix 1; can I demonstrate I have met the criteria with originality and insight?
> 2. My peers in the action research group critically appraising my account; can you see evidence of my values as lived through my practice, the emergence of my living educational theory and the standards of judgement I am using?
> 3. Fellow educators, with a strange taste in literature; have I written in a way that engages you and connects with your own learning journey in ways you find useful?
> 4. My self; through developing this account can I 'see' what I am saying in a way that helps me progress my thinking and practice.

We now go on to discuss the tensions and ethical issues concerned with: supervisors and tutors researching to understand, improve and explain their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of their students; supporting students to engage in forms of research which may be taken as a challenge to orthodoxies within and between disciplines and; realising as fully as they can their educational responsibilities towards their students while at the same time keeping in clear focus their distinct organisational responsibilities as professional educators, supervisors and tutors employed by a Higher Education organisation.

In a Living Theory research approach to professional learning in education, an educator explores the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice?'. One of the implications for a professional educator is to contribute to the professional knowledgebase of education through generating and sharing a valid, evidence-based explanation of educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding (i.e. an account of their living-educational-theory).

Whilst we have drawn data from our supervision of a doctoral and two masters degree research programmes, in our analysis of our pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education, we believe that the over forty Living Theory doctorates accredited by Universities around the world (see - https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml) put the validity of our claim beyond reasonable doubt.

When Whitehead (1989) first put forward the idea of a living-educational-theory it was unusual to include 'I' in the title of a doctoral enquiry. It was also unusual to gain academic accreditation at doctoral level for an individual educator's claim to have generated an explanation for their own educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations.

In this discussion we do not want to ignore the tensions and ethical issues concerned with: supervisors and tutors researching to understand, improve and explain their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of their students; supporting students to engage in forms of research which may be taken as a challenge to orthodoxies within and between disciplines and; realising as fully as they can their educational responsibilities towards their students while at the same time keeping in clear focus their distinct organisational responsibilities as supervisors and tutors employed by a Higher Education organisation.

The tensions can include the choice and competence of supervisors, examiners and members of transfer panels on allowing a student to move from MPhil to a PhD programme. Not all universities have members of staff who are experienced and are competent to supervise Living Theory research programmes. However, it is possible to appoint supervisory teams of supervisors that contain external supervisors with the necessary expertise. In appointing internal and external examiners of submitted theses it is important to check the research and supervisory records of examiners to ensure that there is evidence, in their published work, that they are open to understanding the epistemology of an explanation of an individual's educational influence in learning. We have also noticed a tension between supervisors who have a distinct, disciplinary focus in their own research and contributions to knowledge, and the supervisory qualities needed to supervise a living-educational-theory thesis.

We focus on two different kinds of ethical issues as we enhance educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to developing educational pedagogy in Higher Education. This first is related to the nature of educational practice as a values-laden practical activity. We cannot distinguish something as educational without using value-judgements. We identify the values that give meaning and purpose to our practice as professional educators working in Higher Education as the ethical principles we use to evaluate our practice by. These values, as ethical principles, also form explanatory principles, used by educators to explain their educational influences in the learning of their students when they employ a Living Theory approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education.

The second ethical issue is that faced by Living Theory researchers who are researching with others, whether pupils, students, colleagues or others as those faced by other self-study educational practitioner researchers. We understand the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association and conform to these ethical principles.

We hope that our arguments are persuasive enough to convince you of the value and professional responsibility of generating and sharing your living-educational-theory of the educational influences of your pedagogy in Higher Education. We have focused on the implications of our claim that it is a professional responsibility of educators in Higher Education to research, explain and make public the educational influences of their pedagogies as they ask, research and answer questions of the kind, How do I improve what I am doing?'. The explanations are in terms of their own learning in the learning of their students and in the learning of social formations that influence practice and understandings with values that carry hope for human flourishing. As part of conducting research is making available for public criticisms the results of research, it is important to contribute these explanations of educational influences to the academic and professional knowledgebase of educational practice. In these explanations we hold ourselves accountable, in our pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education, for our educational influences. Extending the educational influences in learning with a Living Theory approach to pedagogical Action Research in Higher Education will require a global social movement of educators in higher education who are willing to hold themselves to account in their living-educational-theories, for living as fully as possible the values that carry hope for human flourishing.

References

Bronowski, J. 1973. *The Ascent of Man*. London: BBC Books.

Briganti, A. 2020. *My living-theory of International Development*. PhD Thesis, Retrieved 12 May 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/ABrigantiphd.pdf

British Educational Research Association 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research.* London: BERA.

Buber, M. 1947. *Between Man and Man.* London; Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.

Gagné, R. M. 1970. *The Conditions of Learning*, 2nd Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Cartwright, S. 2010. *A Critical Reflection On My Learning And Its Integration Into My Professional Practice*. MA Unit, University of Bath. Retrieved 11 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/module/sc3ee3creditsall.pdf

Habermas, J. 1976. *Communication and the evolution of society*. London: Heinemann

Mounter, J. 2012. *As A Headteacher Researcher How Can I Demonstrate The Impact And Self-Understandings Drawn From Living Theory Action Research, As A Form Of Continual Professional Development In Education?* MA Dissertation, University of Bath. Retrieved 11 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/module/joymounterma.pdf

Norton, L. 2009. *Action Research in Teaching and Learning: A practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities*. London: Routledge.

Hirst, P. (Ed.) 1983. *Educational Theory and its Foundation Disciplines.* London: RKP.

Huxtable, M. 2006. *How can I improve my practice through 'walking the talk' and 'dealing with doorsteps'?* MA educational enquiry unit, University of Bath. Retrieved 10 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/mhma06.pdf

Huxtable, M. 2012. How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries? PhD Thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved 12 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/mariehuxtable.shtml

Huxtable, M. 2019. *Living Theory research: Making a difference that matters to Educational Learning and Continual Professional Development.* Paper presented at the 2019 International Professional Development Association conference at Aston University, Birmingham, UK.

Jones, C. 2019. *My living-theory of living inclusive and inclusional empowerment: A Living Theory* Approach. PhD. Thesis, Liverpool Hope University. Retrieved 10 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/chrisphd/chrisphd.pdf

McTaggart, R. 1992. Reductionism and Action Research: Technology versus convivial forms of life, pp. 47-61 in Bruce, C. S. & Russell, A. L. (1992) *Transforming Tomorrow Today.* Brisbane, University of Queensland, Australia.

Mounter, J. 2008. *Can Children Carry Out Action Research About Learning, Creating Their Own Learning Theory?* University of Bath, MA Unit on Understanding Learning and Learners. Retrieved 10 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf

Mounter, J. 2015. *A Doctoral Proposal*. Retrieved 23 November 2019 from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mounter/phdproposal.pdf

Mounter, J. 2019. *A Values-led Leadership MA Programme*. Retrieved 23 November 2019 from https://www.learninginstitute.co.uk/mavalues

Noffke, S. 1997. Professional, Personal, and Political Dimensions of Action Research in, Apple, M. (Ed.) *Review of Research in Education*, 22, Washington: AERA.

Norton, L. 2020. Pedagogical Action Research. Retrieved 12 February 2020 from https://www.linnorton.co.uk/pedagogical-action-research

Norton, L. 2009. *Action Research in Teaching and Learning: A practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities*. London: Routledge.

Popper, K. 1975. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Potts, M. 2012. *How can I Reconceptualise International Educational Partnerships as a Form of Living Citizenship?* PhD, Bath Spa University, UK. Retrieved 19 November 2019 from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/markpotts.shtml

Qutoshi, S. B. 2016. Creating living-educational-theory: A journey towards transformative teacher education in Pakistan. PhD, Kathmandu University, Nepal. Retrieved 10 February 2020 from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/sadruddin.shtml

Reiss, M. J. & White, J. 2013. *An Aims Based Curriculum*: *The significance of human flourishing for schools*. London: Institute of Education Press.

Said, E. W. 1997. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. London; Granta.

Schroyer, T. 1973. Foreword. In Adorno, T. W. *The Jargon of Authenticity.* Translated by Tarnowski, K. & Will, F. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Whitehead, J. 1995. *The Advanced Bluffers Guide For Educational Action Researchers For Improving The Quality Of Professional Practice And Creating Living Educational Theories For Cultural Renewal.* Retrieved 23 November 2019 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/95contents.pdf

Whitehead, J. 1999. Educative Relations in a New Era. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 7(1) 73-90.

Whitehead, J. 2015. *Eulogy for Sally Cartwright on the Posthumous Award of the Diploma of Education at the University of Bath*. Retrieved 22 November 2019 from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/sallycartwrightmastereducatorjw140415.pdf

Whitehead, J. 2019. Creating a living-educational-theory from questions of the kind, 'how

do I improve my practice?' 30 years on with Living Theory research. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(2) 1-19. Retrieved 11 February 2020 from
https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwejolts2019.pdf

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. 2010. *How are we sustaining educational relationships to improve educational practices with teachers and pupils in the generation of educational knowledge?* Paper presented at the BERA Annual Conference, 2010, University of Warwick, UK. Retrieved 12 November 2019 from
https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmh2010.pdf

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. 2016. Creating a Profession of Educators with the living-theories of Master and Doctor Educators, *Gifted Education International*, 32(1) 6-25.

Wood, L. 2010. The Transformative Potential of Living Theory Educational Research. *Educational Journal of Living Theories* 3(1) 105-118. Retrieved 18 April 2020 from
https://ejolts.net/node/177