

# Jack Whitehead

# Validations

Forewords by Jean McNiff and Moira Laidlaw  
Introduction by Robyn Pound

Compiled by Robyn Pound, Moira Laidlaw, Marie Huxtable

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## **Foreword by Jean McNiff**

So, Jack,

Here we are at another transition point, the end of one set of practices within an institution, which you are already turning into a new set of practices outside the institution, yet still within the Academy, as it links with the real world of work-based practices. It is a time of looking back, and forward, of taking stock of how what has happened has shaped the future, a future we are already inhabiting as the present, and finding ways of transforming it into an even better one. The stories in this book tell how you have influenced the learning of people so that they can engage in their own transformational practices and take control of their lives, to bring their improved understandings into their practices and in turn exercise their educational influences in other people's learning. You do indeed hold a special place in all our lives.

What makes you special, in my book, is that you stand up for what you believe in, for ideas and how these are embodied in and lived out in the lives of people; and you encourage them to do the same. What makes you special for me is that you are one of the few people in my life who has been prepared to stand up for me, who has actually been prepared to fight for me. I remember the experience of my transfer meeting from MPhil to PhD – which you were not allowed to attend – when seven men interrogated me yet did not give me a chance actually to explain what I was doing in my study programme, and their final recommendation that I should write up for an MPhil and re-register for a PhD at a later date. And the next day I came back to the University and met you, and you were red with fury and looking for someone's jugular. I remember you talking animatedly with the then (I think) Director of Research, who wonderfully took the trouble to talk with all seven members of the transfer committee, and arrange to reconvene the meeting. It took six months to do this, and it happened. You were allowed to be present, but did not actually say a word during the proceedings, but were there, always there, as I sailed through.

I remember that dreadful review of *Teaching as Learning*, when the book was identified as dangerous because practitioners would like it too much (the author took several pages in a refereed journal to trash it), and you were the

one who wrote the response and got it published and the ideas legitimated. And all through the traumas and battles – yours and mine and ours and other people's – of trying to get the ideas around, the always readiness to respond to an email or a phone call, the outrageous enthusiasm for when things began to go right and the sheer joy of celebration when ideas were recognised as valuable and began to be taken up by individuals and groups in institutions. How many others have you fought for, always encouraged, never let down? They are here, in this book, with their stories of how you stood up for them, fought for them, lifted them by the hand when times got rough, and encouraged them to stand on their own feet and go forward again, enriched by the experience.

It's now almost crest of the wave time for the ideas, Jack, and you are riding it all the way. It's been nearly thirty years for us: I first visited with you in Bath in 1980 and we have been working together one way or another ever since. A lot of ink has flown through the printers since then, and there is plenty more to come. So here's to the next thirty years. May you continue as educational warrior, stupendous champion, and kind friend. May your house always be warm and your computer hot. May love and happiness be yours, as you have brought love and happiness to so many others, as you are about to read in this book of validations. And may you continue to develop what began as your one-person Academy into an Academy for the World, a world that holds so much more promise because you are in it.

Thank you, Jack.

I will now drop you a line to check whether you are free next Wednesday for a chat about some new ideas.

Love,

Jean  
and all of us.



## **Foreword by Moira Laidlaw**

Dear Jack.

Many times in my action research career I have tried to stand back and see how you do what you do. You should know! I've sent you enough drafts in our work together! There has been an abiding fascination for me in coming to terms with your artistry. I always sensed, right from the beginning in 1988, that there would be something significant I could learn from you in order to improve the quality of my own educative relationships, insights, theorising and practice. It was fascinating – in a way a work of art is fascinating. To my mind, you are a great artist, and quite incomparable!

To become engaged in someone's enquiry, you only had to recognise the enthusiasm for the life-force in the enquirer to be able to see how that enthusiasm might democratise and free the world. It's taken me twenty years to understand that particular aspect of your gift. As Robyn said in looking over an earlier draft of this, Jack, your encouragement is like water for plants! I so agree.

Sometimes it's blissful to become absorbed simply in the art of watching. Over the years I was to watch not only how you helped me in my watchfulness – how you encouraged my particular kind of creativity – but to be a privileged witness to how you extended that openness and welcome to all others in their unique enquiries when they came to your door, metaphorically or literally.

I believe to an artist, you become a gallery-goer and art-enthusiast. To a musician, you learn to appreciate counterpoint. To a poet you try harder to understand nuance. To a scientist you revel in conceptualisation and theories - all until the moments of crisis, when you become a listener who absorbs fear, disharmony, stagnation, cul-de-sacs, and gives back hope. Again, as Robyn put it, you inspire the ability to live with chaos until it becomes clear.

What also seems to characterise your abilities as an educator is your genuine interest in people. Having formidable psychological insight (you once told me, had you not been an educator, you might have become a psychotherapist) you 'treat' each individual as an individual, with talents and gifts, with problems

and quirks, all possessing hope and fascination. You do not, however, allow yourself to become embroiled in the psyche as a psychotherapist must. You resist that appeal, in order to main intact *educational* boundaries for yourself and to allow others to create their own. It's a matter of balance, proportion and appropriateness.

Anyway, when you've sown the seed of welcome, you open your door and wait. Sometimes you wait for years (as you did for me and several others I could name!) for that spark, that individual inspiration that transforms a routine enquiry into art as a response to the life-force. So another quality you possess is that you see something significant coming sometimes long before the researcher themselves sees it. Robyn says she believes you consider anyone to be capable of creativity, simply because they are human. You also see when you listen, with that wonderful quality of absorption only you, of anyone I know, possess. You recognise that something is likely to emerge. I doubt you quite know when it will emerge, but you see it coming. And you wait, and tinker, and shape and enthuse and delight, und challenge and charm, and breathe life into us all. Our living fully is you living fully.

And here I have crystallised the beautiful gift of *hope for the other* that saturates your methods. Their hope is your hope. It's an intoxicating gift you have there, Jack!

Another outstanding facet of your abilities lies, I believe, in the power of your belief in the other, which feeds and nurtures, until the other believes in themselves. I know no one who has worked with you as a living theorist who doesn't comment at some time on your capacity to generate and regenerate self-insight, motivation, self-confidence and development.

Having been on the receiving end of your optimism, your tremendous belly-laughing *joie de vivre*, your sometimes whacky sense of humour, singular vision, occasionally annoying focus on rigour and validity (and videos Robyn adds, in the belief that you can capture the intangible!), your tremendous capacity to listen, to remember what has been said sometimes years before (and being held to account for it too, which can be quite irritating) – amongst all that there is also a capacity at work that sees the place of an enquiry in the development of a paradigm.

Quick to recognise the ingenuity of the other and to hold it in trust and hope for the future, you nurture the individual, but with a sense also of our enquiry's dialectics with living theorising and with conceptual theories, and with our developing relationships with the world. You occupy the position, I believe, of a consummate artist whose inspiration is fragments (individuals), but whose passion lies in the whole and wholeness. You are urged on to complete something, intangible unknowable, but imperative for an artist. It's that dialectic that keeps you going, I reckon, because you will insist on going wider, reaching further, if we are concentrating on too narrow a sphere. And our growth is your growth.

This is not to relegate individuals to any kind of lesser status in your 'scheme of things', but in watching you over twenty years I have seen the passion you hold for theory, how your eyes light up in that delicious sense of anticipation when something slots into place, or when it's going to. I have seen some of those marvellous moments when you know more completely than the enquirer what the enquiry is about, because you hold together the one and the many. You are the greatest dialectician I have ever met, and far more interesting than any of the ones I've ever read about! I believe with Robyn, that, in her words, the climate you create is so inspiring that the whole group takes responsibility for itself and acts co-operatively.

Words cannot grasp entirely anyone's individual genius, but I hope these words point towards it. An ostensive definition or some such nonsense!

With love, Jack,  
And, as others keep insisting too...  
Thanks!

Moira xxx



Moira Laidlaw

P.s. Dean Tian Fengjun sent me this picture. I think it says it all!



## How ‘Validations’ came about

Dear Jack ,

As the final academic term of 2008-2009 drew to a close you reminded us that your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday marked the end of your work in its current form with Bath University. I knew I was not alone in experiencing deep appreciation for your quiet assurances and the liberation gifted by living theory action research. I wondered how the end of this era would be marked. Moira, thinking along similar lines, agreed that asking your fellow researchers for their experiences and binding them together as a book was worth a try. It would be a surprise present, Marie suggested and Jean agreed to write a foreword.

Not having access to your contact list we constructed our own and asked people to disseminate the request with this letter:

*Dear research colleagues,*

*Jack Whitehead retires at the end of the summer this year. He has influenced the lives of so many people and changed the face of educational research. 'Bringing the embodied knowledge of practitioners into the public domain so that it can be widely shared'.*

*Moira and I wanted to produce something meaningful to mark his retirement and wondered if you would like to contribute. We suggest a collection of writings from people who have researched with him all bound together would mark our thoughts about him and the contribution he has made. What do you think?*

*If you would like to contribute to this tribute we suggest a short piece of not more than 1000 words explaining what Jack and living theory means to you. Pictures are welcome but unfortunately we cannot accommodate videos. Please send to me at [robyn\\_pound@yahoo.com](mailto:robyn_pound@yahoo.com) or Moira Laidlaw at [moiralaidlaw@hotmail.com](mailto:moiralaidlaw@hotmail.com) by July 20th so we can collate and bind it for him. Our list of email addresses has many gaps because we do not have access to his contact list. Please can you pass this on to anyone else you think would be interested.*

*Any other suggestions are welcome.*

*Robyn Pound and Moira Laidlaw*

Joan reminded us that you are not 'retiring', never will, and are antagonistic even to use of the 'R' word. Of course! Silly us! Marie helped reword the invitation to, '*the end of your tenured contract with the University of Bath at the end of the summer this year*'. She also suggested we could have DVDs in a pocket at the back so you could put them on the web, and she provided many of the photos. Like a terrier she tracked contact addresses.

Expressions of interest promising contributions arrived in a kind of e-storm from all over the world. Fifty six submissions tumbled in like growing treasure and frequently moved us to tears. These are researchers spanning your 40+ year journey in education. The similarities of experience, unique but similar in every piece, offer validations of both living theory as methodology and you Jack, as practitioner. The submissions included in this book are evidence of an **I-Jack** relationship widely experienced.

We apologise to the hundreds of other friends and fellow researchers who would have liked to contribute but our inability to contact them or the short time span define the responses presented in alphabetical order here. The contributors know you are likely to put these on the web. You will find a pocket at the back for extra notes and a DVD.

Robyn Pound

August 2009



**Jack's standards of judgement  
validated by colleague friends**

## Contributors

|                 |            |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Aymer           | Cathy      | Kisiewicz       | Morag      |
| Bruce Fergusson | Pip        | Laidlaw         | Moira      |
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| Charles         | Eden       | Larter          | Andrew     |
| Church          | Madeleine  | Lomax           | Pam        |
| Cripps          | Louise     | Mackay          | Anne       |
| D'Arcy          | Pat        | McDermott       | Kevin      |
| Delong          | Jacqueline | McNiff          | Jean       |
| Delpot          | Alette     | Mellett         | Peter      |
| Eames           | Kevin      | Mills           | Ruth       |
| Formby          | Claire     | Mussett         | Mary       |
| Foster          | Don        | Naidoo          | Marion     |
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| Jones           | Chris      | Walton          | Joan       |
| Jones           | Jocelyn    | Walton          | Chris      |
| Kemp            | Kate       | Wood            | Leslie     |
| King            | Ronald     |                 |            |



*Dear Jack*

*My most poignant memory of being at Bath was the supervision group where you, Michael and Lawrence sat with me and 'held' me emotionally while I remembered my recently deceased father. At one point you reminded me to breathe. Your inspiration has been with me throughout my time at Bath and beyond. You gave me the confidence and self-belief that helped me to finish my thesis especially when the going got tough. At one point in the group I asked you to bear me in mind. I had only meant over the vacation period but typically you thought that I meant forever and I am very grateful to you because I continue to feel your mindfulness at all times. It is this quality that you bring to all your relationships that ensures that we all love and admire you. I will continue to treasure your bearing me in mind. I wish you joy in this new phase of your life.*

*Love and thoughts*

*Cathy Aymer*

## **Tribute to Jack, on his (theoretical!) retirement**

Tena koe, te Rangatira (greetings to the Chief)

Where do I start? My visit to Bath in 1994, newly enrolled in my PhD studies, on teacher exchange for three months to Norwich. I had encountered Jack's writing, and made an appointment to visit while in the area. Initial impressions: considerable energy, a black leather jacket, welcoming vibes to an unknown from the other side of the world, the poster on the wall reading "Subvert the dominant paradigm!" Right up this Kiwi's alley. The purchase of "The Growth of Educational Knowledge" and its wisdom. The honesty around the clash of cultures included in the book. Attending the Monday evening group – from memory, that night it met in Jack's own home, and Moira Laidlaw was there, among others.

Subsequent contact, via email, over years, with both Jack and members of the Monday evening group. How I valued that contact with like-minded researchers, when struggling with an action research thesis located in my own narrow polytechnic context. The encouragement; the dialogue; the enrichment with visits from both Moira and Jean; haven't got you to present here in New Zealand yet Jack but surely the time is now?

The things I treasure about Jack: his constant, provocative encouragement of others to extend the boundaries of their thinking; his prodigious energy and commitment in the face of often derogatory or dismissive institutional and personal responses; his amazing ability to pick up nuggets of gold from lots of people's different writing and to connect up the dots; his valuing of input from our part of the world, whether pakeha (non-Māori) or Māori. Thank you, my friend; I look forward to continued contact regardless of your 'retirement'!

I conclude with a proverb (whakatauāki) cited by my Māori co-worker Andrea Elliott - Hohepa on a project we're just concluding together. It's an encouragement for us all to do our little bit, and I think encapsulates Jack's encouragement of us all to do just that. (A kahikatea is a very tall tree!) *He iti te kōpara ka rērere i te puhi o te kahikatea.* Though the bellbird is small, it can reach the crown of the kahikatea.

With love, Pip

Educational consultant and researcher, New Zealand

## **Jack**

Jack you have contributed to my development as a teacher in so many ways it is hard to encapsulate. Foremost you have restored that sense of being valued as a person in an educational system in which I and others have often felt devalued. The consequence has been that you have given me a sense of worth and value as a teacher to continue and to take risks in developing new paths that open up learning. The students with whom I have worked have benefited directly and indirectly as learners and as people from your insights. It has been in the generous acknowledgement of the other that you have provided a space for myself and the students to grow.

Your vast knowledge which we have so often tapped into has set us all on different paths of discovery, which has enabled myself and each student to go with confidence in new directions. Your unwavering encouragement and open approach to ideas has enabled those of us on the Extended Project to reach into areas that otherwise might have been closed. The opportunity for school students to give a lecture at a university theatre has allowed them to face new challenges which all have risen to and left with a inner confidence of what they can achieve.

Your holistic approach to tutoring has enabled a context to be given to work which otherwise might have been lacking and has allowed personal values, experiences and humour to be part of the learning process which is both enriching and deepening. Your Tuesday evening seminars have been a reflective oasis and have provided a creative space for thoughts and ideas - an opportunity rarely found in the school day.

Your all embracing and inclusive approach is infectious and allows each individual to find their own unique space from which to grow. This in turn has become an underpinning characteristic of the Extended Project which I believe now has its own life affirming energy which is being transferred from one group of students to the next.

Below are just a few of the comments that the students would like to pass on to you in recognition of your contribution to them as students and people.

'We have all appreciated the opportunity to work with your insight into learning and people and we have enclosed a few quotes to represent our appreciation of your work with us at Wellsway:

*'Your open minded approach was inspirational.'* Jack Cooper

*'You always seemed really enthusiastic about everyone's research..'* Fiona Stainer

*'You are always good at thinking up different pathways for each individual.'* Caroline Hughes

*'Your approach to writing made our essays more personal.'* Jo Mitchell

*'Your enthusiasm is infectious and encouraged us to be enthusiastic about our projects'.* Isaac Palmer

*'You made sure we are comfortable with the people we are working with'.*

Jenny Harbour - Psychology student from the Action Research Day for Wellsway. Psychology students.

This a small thank you for a very significant contribution.

With all our love

Sally



Dear Jack

Your connection to values that seek and identify that which is best about us humans; our humanity, is a gift to the world. Your ability to notice value in me, to identify it and to help me find words to describe what I was saying without words, to theorise and validate it, has been transformational to my life and the lives of those I work with. I will always be deeply grateful to you Jack and do my best to continue to live by values that enable us to transcend the limitations of division while celebrating the richness of difference. I hope that I am able to contribute to understanding and practice that will help us find more peaceful, equitable and sustainable ways of living on this planet. Your warmth and personal embodiment as well as your intellectual and academic work has been of huge significance in this.

Enjoy your life Jack.

Eden

## **Jack Whitehead. Where we meet.**

A man forged in the fire pit of bullies, who chooses to stay and rise.  
A cool judge of the fudge that we know that we make for the prize  
of calling ourselves Doctors.

Not the bone-sawing, blood-letting type,  
nor the mind-bending, soul-searching type,  
but the digging type, the sifting and sorting and juggling type,  
the fiddling, grand contradictory type  
who journey with words,  
and struggle with how the life fits the work and the work fits the life.

These doctors take many moons to emerge,  
they find themselves buried in rooms  
filled with papers and fluff and find after all that it's never enough  
they must make a video, do a dance, track back,  
upload all their thoughts, re-edit, track back  
unpick every seam, carve anew, re-attack  
resist the temptation to buy a new Mac.

They dream of the place where simplicity beckons,  
where complexity nods and simplicity holds.  
Then they know that it's done, cause it's done, there's no more.

Really it's all as old as the core  
New ways of seeing prove old ways of being.  
Bit of a contradiction that.

With love, as always.  
Madeline  
July 21 2009

Dear Jack,

I wanted to contribute something to this book which would be of value to you, and short of a finished assignment, I couldn't think what would really express what I wanted to say that would connect with you. Then today I received this message on a card from one of the Year 6 children who is moving to secondary school at the end of term.

*'Thank you for being my teacher, you have helped me think about things deeper than I could have imagined and I will take your influence on with me'*

And those are also the words I would like to offer to you from me.

There are two things in particular I think I most value:

- Firstly I would particularly like to thank you for the respectful way you are willing to engage with my ideas, and also to offer your own ideas in an equal exchange.
- Secondly, for the way you create such an educational space for thinking to happen, and for such diversity of thoughts to be generated. It provides a real opportunity for me to think collaboratively and formulate ideas.

With the help of you and others I find that I am able to 'think about things deeper than I could have imagined'

With my thanks,

Louise

## **Recollections about Jack**

from Pat D'Arcy

Whenever I call Jack to mind, I can see him in his black leather jacket, smiling broadly, with red cheeks and twinkly eyes. I am quite sure that a similar picture is evoked in the minds of all his friends and students. I cannot recall a single instance when he looked bored or irritated or detached from whatever group he happened to be with. Not that he dominated any of those conversations - in fact (surprisingly, I often thought) he was an extremely good listener, always ready to take a genuinely active interest in what others had to say about whatever topic was under discussion.

I first met Jack in the mid seventies when I was on a part-time secondment from the Schools Council Writing across the Curriculum Project. The Bath University School of Education was still based in the centre of town, where Habitat now stands. I think in those days it was on the first floor over a Jaeger shop. Anyway, Jack had just recently joined the department and I know that we discovered within minutes of meeting - or so it seems - how many convictions we shared about giving students confidence to engage actively in their own learning.

In 1976 I moved back into what could fairly be described as a 'bog standard' Sec. Mod. as Head of the English Department and I can tell you it wasn't an easy ride! But in my second year there, I had given my 4th (Y10) group the freedom, in the summer term, to make independent decisions about their own writing and reading in four out of five of their time-tabled lessons. It worked well - they were enjoying themselves and so was I. I talked enthusiastically to Jack about their commitment and I remember him coming out to Stonehouse to video one of our sessions where pupils were working on their own or in pairs. I have just realised that even in those days, he was keen to capture visual as well as oral evidence of how learning happens.

Then later, in the eighties, when I was an English Adviser, I had the pleasure of co-tutoring with him, two groups of Wiltshire primary/secondary teachers for Academic Diplomas, based on an Action Research approach to teaching and learning in their own classrooms. All of us learnt a great deal from that

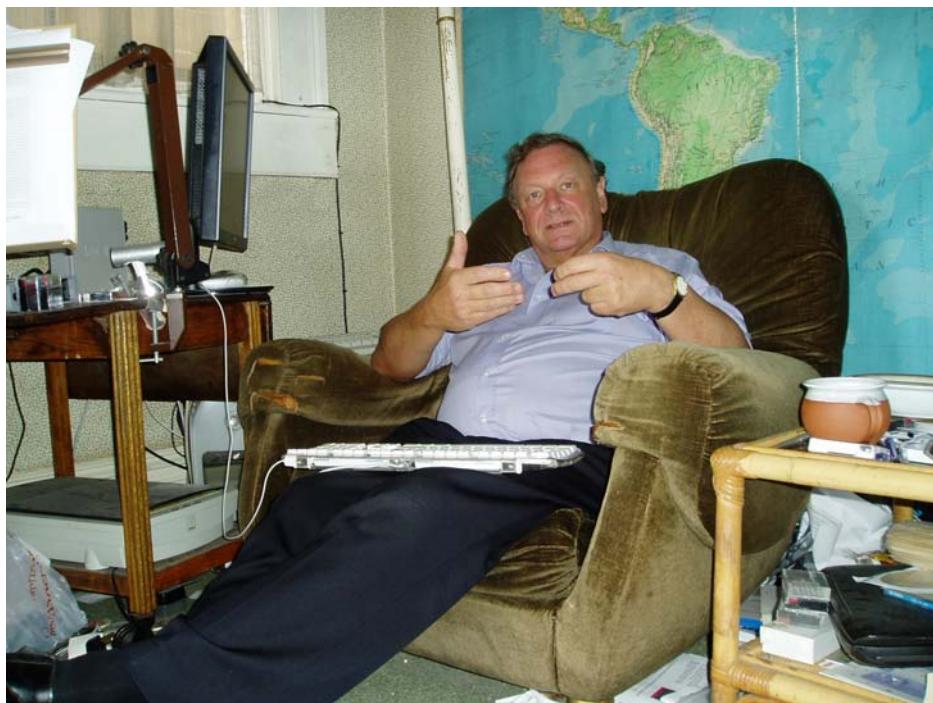
shared experience. Not surprisingly, many of us became close friends and whenever we meet now for a drink and a chat, Jack is always spoken of with much affection.

Later still, when, thankfully, I had escaped the burden of having to teach - or inspect - according to the dictat of the National Curriculum and the ghastly SATs, I had the opportunity instead, of conducting my own Action Research investigation into 'what characterises a genuinely meaningful response on the part of teachers to the stories written by their children and students, 5-16'. This was a wonderful way of spending the first few years of my own retirement as I was able to involve many of the primary and secondary teachers with whom I had worked in the previous decade, which I now look back to as a kind of golden age, when we were able to make discoveries together of how to create effective contexts for learning.

I also had the privilege of having Jack as my supervisor throughout that period. He was always quite unstinting with the time that he gave, sitting knee to knee in his incredibly untidy office, drinking coffee and clarifying our insights through lively dialectic - I guess that's the word Jack would use! It would be an understatement to say that we didn't always see eye to eye(!) but I certainly have Jack to thank for enabling me to produce a Ph.D thesis that did not require any further amendments.

Although my recollections have been written in the past tense, all is certainly not yet over. I am sure that the future will be just as active for Jack on his global travels, inspiring other educators to engage not just the minds but also the hearts of their students, as it has always been in the past for everyone who has contributed to this anthology. So thank you, Jack, once again, for your support as a colleague and for your valued friendship. with love,

Pat



**As seen by many research colleagues**

**Dear Jack**

July 20, 2009

We met in Toronto, Ontario in February of 1996 at the Act Reflect Revise conference. Over lunch you talked me into starting my PhD studies with you despite my concerns over the distance between us and over my total lack of expertise in the use of technology. After we corresponded by email and you convinced me that I could be a scholar, I started my studies in September of that year. During the early months of email dialogue you encouraged me to write about my practical world and steered my away from the theoreticians and thus I will never forget my first day in your office in Bath.

Amidst the incredible piles of coffee cups and paraphernalia, papers, books and videotapes, you laid out a pile of books for me to read and you rushed out to a meeting. One of these books was Martin Buber's very small, very innocuous-looking book, *I and Thou*. By the time you returned from your meeting, with your usual life-affirming energy, I was ready to pack my bags and go home since I was incapable of reading even one small intellectual book pertaining to educational philosophy. I think I said something of the sort because you guffawed with such strength, I thought you would attract the entire department to see how amusing a discussion of Buber could be. You consoled me by showing me the important bits and by distracting me to a more accessible text.

As I watch my own students now I can see that amazing transformation that occurs from the initial writing to the scholarly dialogue and the amazing work that they produce. The academic language that presents such a barrier to getting teachers in classrooms to read academic papers can be bridged by the very process that you taught me and I teach my students: start with their own embodied knowledge and then bring in the academic theory to support them to investigate and theorize about their own practice.

You have made me into a techie geek. In 1996 I didn't even know how to 'cut and paste' let alone use the internet as a research tool. You taught me that. Every year there is new technology that rises like the phoenix demanding new learning from digital media to uploading clips to Youtube. I am a MAC convert now owning two of them, although none are as big as Big Bertha! You taught me to use the video camera to collect data of educational influence. More students in the M.Ed. cohorts are now using video to represent their way of knowing and their embodied knowledge.

With your encouragement I have attended and usually presented at AERA every year since 1996 in New York. Because I have no access to conference accounts,

every year I think it will be my last and then I write submissions, thinking if they don't get accepted, I won't attend and once more I'm off to share my learning, a responsibility that you take very seriously as demonstrated in your continuing learning and writing and your exhortations to us all to build that critical mass of living educational theorists and extend the knowledgebase of teaching and learning by action researchers.

The battles that you have fought, the rejections you have endured, the abusive attitudes that you have confronted, have created a space in the Academy for insider practitioners like my students and me. We are all in your debt. You epitomize one person's capacity to continually learn and to influence positively the learning of others and the learning of social formations.

You taught me to clarify my values and recognize when I am a living contradiction; to use my values as standards to evaluate my educational influence; to see my values as the screen for making educational decisions; to reflect on my work and life in a systematic way. This cycle of learning and improvement is so embedded in my being that there is no escape from it and no rest from its demanding presence. I think I thank you for that!

I think that my body of knowledge that has emerged since the completion of my doctoral work is becoming more significant than the original work at Bath in 2002. Some evidence of this resides in the amazing research conducted by my students as they teach me to be a better teacher; some evidence resides in the papers we have co-written and/or you have encouraged and supported me to write. How often have you graciously responded to the multitude of Dear Jack emails asking for help?

I know that you are not retiring, only changing physical contexts. Your indefatigable passion for social justice will challenge you to continue improving the world of teaching and learning. I hope to continue as part of that vision for a better world and to send you more Dear Jack messages.

I did eventually read Buber's work as my confidence grew in reading theoretical works where the academic language of epistemology and ontology was pervasive. I sum up this letter with my favourite line that sums up your influence on me and on my students, "he will be guided by the recognition of values which is in his glance as an educator" (Buber, 1947, p. 122).

With love,  
Jackie

## **I first met Jack twenty-five years ago,**

when I was starting my MPhil at Bath University. Previously, I had been working with a group of teachers in Wiltshire (led by Pat D'Arcy, the English adviser at that time) who were exploring their understanding of learning, discussing possibilities for developing their teaching, and publishing accounts of their classroom practice. Encouraged by Pat, some members of the group put together a proposal for a classroom-based research project, which we brought to a number of HEIs, only to be met by a blank wall of indifference. It wouldn't be proper research, would it, if it was carried out by teachers investigating their own classroom practice? Where would be the statistical data, the control groups and the other paraphernalia of the dominant research paradigm at that time?

Luckily for us, Bath University took a chance on our proposal, so, in conjunction with Andy Larter, another teacher from Pat's group, I began investigating my classroom practice in 1984 and we were quickly channelled in the direction of Jack Whitehead. Jack understood immediately what we were trying to do and, although he was not our supervisor, gave his time and support to us with characteristic generosity. He encouraged us in what we were doing, and got us thinking about the nature and significance of teachers' practical knowledge in relation to the positivist research paradigm which was then dominant. When we went to BERA conference with Jack for the first time, however, we became aware of the strength of the opposition to action research, based on the view that, well, it's possibly good professional development for those involved in it, but it's not really meaningful research which could be taken seriously by universities.

The research landscape is totally different now, though, and action research is funded by the Training and Development Agency at Masters level, with action research PhDs accredited with equanimity by Bath University and others. Jack's part in this transformation cannot be overstated, I think, as he lived out his values by drawing on his erudition, his intellectual perspicacity, and his sheer bloody-mindedness, refusing to bow down before 'the truth of power'. However, it's not simply as an internationally-respected academic that so many people know him. My daughters, when they were young, used to refer

to him as ‘the man with the big laugh’, since, every time Jack laughed, the cups and plates on the dresser in our dining room shook and rattled. And Jack laughs a lot.

He was always great company at conferences, too, and I remember one time in Nottingham, when Jack insisted on being taken by Andy Larter, Erica Holley and myself to a pub which was reputed to brew the strongest beer in the country. To get there, we had to take a taxi from Nottingham University, and navigate by OS map into the wilds of the Nottinghamshire Leicestershire border, down a dirt track which ended by a system of locks on the Grand Union Canal. Unfortunately, the particular brew we were looking for was off that night, and we sat in the lounge bar while the resident musician noodled away on the electric organ, treating us to cover versions of the Tom Jones songbook, as well as to other standards delivered in the club style. Finally, we couldn’t stand it any longer, and moved into the comparative quiet of the saloon bar, where, as Andy pointed out, we gradually became aware of Jack’s disappointment at being taken away from the lounge; he’d actually been enjoying the music!

Overall, then, Jack isn’t just an outstanding academic with a deserved international reputation based on his tenacity, integrity and depth of scholarly knowledge. His influence changed my understanding of practical wisdom in education, certainly. But beyond all that, in the process of living out his values, he embodies a depth of humanity and sensitivity to others that has put him in touch with such a wide range of individuals in their understandings and interactions. He’s a man whose truth has passed the test of time, and it’s been great knowing him and working with him.

Kevin

## **What Jack and living theory means to me**

*Jack probably doesn't know it but he is a significant person in my life. How fortunate I was to have Jack as my tutor when I started the Masters programme in 2005 even though I didn't understand what he was talking about for at least a year! Luckily, two years later I was beginning to "get it" and I told Jack so in this email quote:*

*Tuesday evenings have become very important to me. They remind me that teaching is my vocation, they enable me to share excitements and concerns about the children I teach, they allow me to give and receive support and they challenge and stimulate my thinking and learning. Perhaps most importantly of all, you, Jack have helped me to believe in the value and worth of my embodied knowledge, of my story. (Formby, 2007)*

*Claire Formby (sent with love)*

## **The idea that Jack Whitehead would retire is clearly a complete nonsense.**

Over the years there have been many who sought to block Jack's path with challenges to his research and research approach. They have all been brushed aside and his work has – and he would hate to acknowledge this – become almost universally accepted. He will brush aside the potential barrier of age with the same *sangfroid* and continue to inspire those who really care about education.

Jack played an important role in several aspects of my life. He helped me develop my thinking about Resource-based learning and the importance of helping pupils to learn rather than being vessels to be filled by teachers. He helped me to significantly improve my writing skills and, more importantly, to have the courage to ditch redundant information. I will never forget spending months on a particular section of my thesis only to be told by Jack that it was interesting and well written but not relevant to the case I was trying to make. He was right, and it went into the bin. But most significantly – something I am sure applies to many who have had the privilege of working with Jack – he helped me to question what I was doing and how I could improve it. It is a lesson I have never forgotten. Whether the improvements I have made would necessarily please him is altogether another matter!

The work goes on, retirement or not. Continue to enjoy.



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Anat Geller

Anat's DVD is in the back cover

## **Life affirming encounters**

### **A Tribute to Jack Whitehead from Sigrid Gjøtterud**

A pink book (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002) explained action research to me with examples I could relate to, and with a clarity that unfolded new aspects of research. It was useful for research as well as teaching. Useful in an extended way as it was creating emotions of joy and enthusiasm. So when starting my Phd I wanted to conduct a study along the line of “how can I improve what I do?” And when granted some travel-money, I saw an opportunity to meet a person behind the words. Jack Whitehead welcomed me to meet with him and his students. His website helped me prepare for the meeting and provided a lot of material containing the notions of living theories, living logics, living contradictions and inclusionality<sup>1</sup>. These were all notions in use as if everyone should know them. But my dictionaries (English-Norwegian) did not reveal their secrets.

My first encounter was quite confusing. But then I met, on this and later occasions, this inclusive, open minded person who I felt took an interest in my struggles to comprehend. I was included in the discussions, as I observed every student was. Everyone’s ideas were taken seriously and held up for scrutiny. The notions of living logic and living theories came alive with meaning. I realized how my values were always present in my encounters with students, colleagues family and friends, and how I sometimes behaved in contradiction with those values. The notion of living contradiction was obvious. As I learned to express my values and account for my actions, my living theory was beginning to form.

The encounters with Jack have been eye-opening in many ways. Attaining and observing his teaching was what gave ‘inclusionality’ life. Jack has a way of using his eyes, picking up the words used, using everyone’s names, sensing the atmosphere and distributing the attention, and at the same time giving each person particular attention. No time wasted, always going straight for the core issues. A Master of teaching, he is. Mastery not so easily captured in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.inclusional-research.org/>

descriptions, but better in pictures and video. The kind of knowledge showing itself in this loving, life affirming way is significant in our relationships and in our research. This is a message for our post modern times that Jack has revealed to me. ‘Postmodern science must [therefore] overcome the separation between truth and virtue, value and fact, ethics and practical necessity’, says David Bohm(1988 p67/68) And I think that Jack is showing how, through living theory research. He is not just showing how, but through the dialogues in groups, face-to-face, as well as through online writing, invitations for discussions, commenting on papers and video-clips and by helping making the videos, he conducts a development process where we can all contribute. In this way we are all included in his work of finding a new epistemology for educational research.



Jack November 2008, focused on helping me making a video.

I am grateful for all guidance and inspiration! I am grateful for the courage, clarity and intuition to plow new ground, struggling to give wholeness an opportunity and thus hope for humanity! I am grateful for your generosity! Thank you, Jack!

Love to Jack from Sigrid

Bohm, D. (1988). Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World. *The reenchantment of Science. Postmodern Proposals.*, D.R. Griffin. New York, University of New York Press: 57-68  
Mc Niff, J. and J. Whitehead (2002). Action research: Principles and practice. London, Routledge Falmer

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 22, 2009 8:39 AM

**Subject:** RE: Jack Whitehead's tribute

Dear Mary (Gurney),

Thank you so much for sending this on. I am afraid I have not had time to check out my email for a few days because we have an interesting visit from 6 15 year olds from Bradford who won a competition filming educational and health disadvantage in Bradford inner city and have come to do the same here in ten days in our pilot research area. They are keeping me busy but their enthusiasm for what they are doing is a real inspiration. They do not seem to have much Church contact which saddens me, as they have great empathy with the situation around them here.

Jack was meant to be visiting in Durban around the end of this month but a mutual friend tells me that it is postponed until November-December time. I am still enabled, through his introductions to his friends here, to continue trying to develop the participative work with children, which is needed to help them face the challenges of the HIV crisis. I think it may be too late for me to express this gratitude in print but I am aware how many lives he has touched and how many people in South Africa have been inspired to continue their work by him.

I look forward to meeting you in England. ... I am up to my eyes in some very difficult negotiation work without a second to spare!

Hope to see you soon,

Amy

## **My tribute to dear Jack Whitehead.**

I remember vividly my first ‘Jack discussion’. Intense, stimulating, questioning, moving and covering a depth and breadth that ‘blew us away’. I was one of a group of secondary school teachers on a seven day residential DES course in Bath. Jean McNiff was also on the course and for both of us it was quite an experience as we were learning ‘Developmental Group Work’ experientially (led by the late Dr Leslie Button). Our challenge on the Saturday afternoon was to plan and facilitate a conversation with an unknown visitor. Jack had volunteered to come along at short notice as a visitor to my small group. Needless to say, our conversation didn’t require any ‘facilitation’! We had an amazing discussion which we were reluctant to close but we were aware that Jack had given up his Saturday afternoon, and had also managed to keep Jonathan, then about 4 or 5 years, calmly at his knee for the duration of this powerful exchange, so we eventually had to draw the conversation to a stop (a near impossible social skill on this occasion). In this relatively short space of time, Jack showed his extreme enthusiasm for education. The occasion – a ‘non-chance’ meeting as far I am concerned – is a typical example of his generosity of time and involvement and a splendid example of how Jack has held his absorbing career in a loving relationship with his family.

Two years later I found myself blessed with a part-time secondment to study the development of Personal and Social Education. Jack’s timely visit to Gloucester Teachers’ Centre to talk about action research led to Gloucestershire LEA funding me to study with him at Bath. During the five years of my practitioner research I was inspired, encouraged, challenged, supported, energised and strengthened in the face of opposition and resistance to change – all driven by Jack’s commitment to action research and the creation of living theory which he infused me with at a pace that, on reflection, was expertly adjusted to my developing awareness. A brilliant teacher himself, Jack led me to heights of understanding of my own practice that no other approach could have done. And his humour had its place! I shall never forget Jack’s laughter when I presented him with the fruits of a month’s statistical testing and analysis because I had panicked and lost faith in ostensive evidence.

I am proud that Jack, Jean and I, with others, spear-headed the teacher-researcher movement at Bath and that Jean and I were the first school-based teachers to be awarded their doctorates by the University. I am sad that education has changed in that secondments and school-practitioner research are rarer now. I am still convinced that the grassroots collaborative development of educational knowledge, values, theory, and understanding of practice is the key to quality improvement of teaching (as opposed to the impositions of recent times.) I made the case for this in ‘Implementor or Innovator? A Teacher’s Challenge to the Restrictive Paradigm of Traditional Research’ - an opening chapter in Pam Lomax’s first BERA dialogues ‘The Management of Change’ and, twenty years on, the case is just as strong.

Through my honoured and precious time working with Jack I became a life-long action researcher. I have taken my values as a reflective practitioner with me on my educational journey as a teacher then an educational psychologist and now a free-lance action research project leader and writer. I owe my approach to Jack. I’d like to thank Jack for his major contribution to education through inspiring so many of us in such a wide range of settings. Thank you Jack for changing my life and work.

With love

Mary (Jack’s first Ph.D. student)



## Improving Practice. at the Conversation Café

The look that says it all!

Love Sandra



***Self Portrait 2007-08*** Andrew Henon

You and your work have been an influential source of inspiration to me and have informed my own work, I look forward to continuing our conversations as we move the work on and thank you Jack.

*Jack,*

*I'm sure you'll smile when I confess to writing this at the very last possible moment to meet the deadline. Stone, writing, Erica, blood; you get the idea.*

*It's been fun, hasn't it? And will continue to be as I'm counting on your support, interest and company for a long time.*

*In a book like this it's only right that I make some observations about you as a supervisor. As you were my first and last supervisor I didn't really know what to expect. At first I think I expected you to be like a teacher trainer but you quickly put me right about that. It's only now, supervising my own dissertation students that I fully appreciate how you worked. You're always welcoming. You ask good questions and don't supply the answers, relishing how conversations take you to places you hadn't foreseen. You're generous with your time and resources. You link ideas with other ideas, and explain why they are significant. You listen carefully. And you laugh and like a drink.*

*So, thank you.*

*And lots of love,*

*Erica*

### **Joining the Group**

I am not academic. This is a personal note about Jack as group leader. I had heard about Jack and read some of his work on Action Research years ago, and then last year went to a brilliant talk at Bath uni by Alan Rayner on quantum science, where I heard that he and Jack were combining their approaches at an evening group at the uni. I was so excited that I just had to go. Not a little nervous and aware that I was venturing far out of my depth, I found my way to the Senior Common Room. There they were, tucked away at the end of a long, forbidding space. The first thing I received was a wonderful smile from Jack, who welcomed me, introduced me to the group and carefully slotted me in towards the end of the round that had just started of briefly sharing current, uppermost thoughts. I shared my nervousness, which brought more smiles.

He then introduced the discussion topic, and off it went, as I'd anticipated, far above my head. I noticed that Jack picked up and expanded on comments people had made in the opening round, and I appreciated very much his way of asking, as if he hadn't quite understood, if he could clarify what someone had just said; I knew he was helping me. The last time I had been to an academic discussion group at Bath Uni, I had not been able to get a word in edgeways, and had summoned all my courage at the end to say that the reason I hadn't spoken was because I just couldn't manage the fight for space, which was greeted by "Well, aren't we having our wrists slapped!"

This group was conspicuously different, with lots of pauses as people took things in. I decided it was because of Jack, who sat in a spread-out way, emanating comfort and relaxation, speaking briefly and softly, and constantly making links between what people were saying, weaving an empathic as well as comprehensible web. I was very moved by the fact that he made a point of referring to me three times, no less: "Grethe's interesting comment ... ", etc.

Students were indistinguishable from professors, outsiders from insiders; everyone received equal warmth and interest. At the end, we went round again, Jack's way of ensuring that everyone felt they had participated, and it gave me another chance to remember those difficult names of overseas graduate students. As I left, he thanked me for coming and said he hoped I'd be there the next week. I have never felt so welcome in and nurtured by a group – thanks to one man. Now, almost a year later, I believe that that little group is changing the whole university, a butterfly effect, just by its weekly presence in the room. Grethe

**From:** "Jacqui Hughes"  
**To:** "Robyn Pound"

Hi Robs

Lovely to see you today. Please add my bit for Jack:

Jack,  
When the going got *really* tough you were there Jack - to read,  
listen, offer your thoughts and provide unstinting  
encouragement and ongoing support. Thank you for helping me  
stick with the process!

Awarded action research PhD 2006

Very best wishes for your future career!

Jacqui H X

## **How Jack Whitehead influenced me to pursue a PHD.**

I have not known Jack for long, only 6 months, and yet he has had a profound affect on my life. Before I met Jack I saw education as a series of hurdles to jump in order to get pieces of paper that would convince people that they should give me a job I would enjoy and that I would be enable me to help others. I have been fortunate enough to have always found such jobs and have been honoured to play a part to benefit many people's lives when they have needed support. When I met Jack I was not interested in increasing the pieces of paper I had and couldn't see why I would consider another academic course.

I was invited by Marie Huxtable to come along to Conversation Café at 8am on a Thursday morning to meet Jack and see whether I would like to do a Masters. I was reluctant both because I am not a morning person and because I had no funding or inclination to do a Masters. Marie and I had inspired one another in our conversation so I did wake up early to get to the Conversation Café. Marie had said I would like Jack and due to the way we had clicked I felt it was worth the effort to attend. It was a decision I will never regret.

In the last 6 months Jack has introduced me to Living Educational Theory. He has given me the permission to write over 40000 words towards an autobiography and influenced me to pursue a PHD which I am currently writing a proposal for. The difference for me is that I am not pursuing a PHD for the piece of paper I may receive at the end but to influence my own practice, the practice of others and the learning of the children and young people I work with. I am excited about the educational journey rather than the destination. I feel this is a very special gift that I have not received before for anything other than a moment by a few other teachers who battled to keep spaces open for me despite the systems they worked within.

Jack personifies the life affirming energy that he struggles to put into words. I have enjoyed the conversations that have taken place during Thursday mornings and Tuesday evenings with Jack and others. As he has

pointed out on many occasions those that come along on those days leave more energised than when they arrived. Jack holds these spaces open and I have been privileged to be part of them.

As I now look to communicate my own living theory I am excited to follow in Jack's footsteps. I look forward to the challenge and support Jack will provide me as I work to document my influence on my own education and those I work with. I also look forward to the continued influence Jack will have on my education that he has already revolutionised.

I look forward to Jack having as much influence as he has had in his career in his retirement!

Sonia Hutchison.  
June 22 2009

## **Jack: A super guide for those who are searching on an unknown journey for Living Theory!**

I was impressed by Jack when I first visited him and had my initial tutorial with him. In that meeting, I found he was very open to new ideas and new technological products. He welcomed people in such a way that everyone in his presence became a friend. I remember how he invited me to a Monday dialogue after my tutorial. To my surprise, he carried the cups, cookies, and coffee in a container into the meeting-room himself. It is very unusual in my culture, even in my region, for a senior lecturer to serve his colleagues and his students in this way when he is holding open a discussion-space. In Taiwan, students would usually undertake these services and help the professors, not the other way round. To my mind Jack is very modest and kind to people around him.

The second thing I would like to share is about Jack's feedback on my application of his living theory. I wrote my second essay and cited Living Theory. In fact, I did not know Jack at all at that time. However, I was studying the creation processes of the patent inventors in my institute. Apart from Jack's ideas, I wasn't able to find a theory to accommodate the discovery or Eureka-moments of various innovations in varied contexts. Therefore, I introduced Jack's idea of Living Theory that practitioners didn't already have – a theory that was relevant to the very moment in which he or she has a sudden insight to solve a technological problem. I then had a tutorial with Jack after I had handed in my report; he encouraged me to nurture my own original understandings or expressions of living theory. He strongly urged me not to imitate or follow others but instead I should develop my own account for everything I was learning from him and others.

The society in my home country, Taiwan, has just finished its transformation into an open environment from a more authoritative style. In our childhood, we were asked to memorize a lot of facts or classics. Seldom were we encouraged to think differently or radically. I think the suggestion Jack gave to me is very meaningful and very challenging at the same time.

I had assumed that Jack as an outstanding scholar had always received respect

from the university. After I read the first E-journal paper he had published in the Educational Journal of Living Theories, I suddenly realized he had been under extreme pressure and severely criticized by some of his colleagues as his research was too radical for them. I understood why he always encouraged me to keep trying different approaches persistently, just as he had done before.

Another thing is worthy of mention, and that is that Jack invited me to attend the dialogue in the Senior Room on Mondays. It was here I began to learn about Inclusionality from Alan. I also noticed that Jack had changed his position from a dialectician to an Inclusionary Enquirer. I was free to question Darwin's Natural Selection Evolutionary theory and solve my concern about the malicious effect of the idea that "competition is a necessary evil" in society these days. Jack's use of Inclusionality is original in some aspects; a loving energy circulates through dynamic relationships between human beings and their environment. For me, Nature teaches me many things about life in the wild. No matter whether the jungle is physical or artificial, they work in a similar way. I really appreciate that.

Happy times always pass quickly. Since I have stayed in Bath for around two years, I have really enjoyed the life with Jack, our friends at the Monday meeting, and Marie, who is an encourager. On December 28 2008, just after Christmas, we had a wonderful dinner at a newly-opened Chinese restaurant in Bristol. We had a good time together, and I could tell Jack and Marie enjoyed the different foods. I only worry that we had too much tasty food!

Thank you, Jack, for you have made a difference in my life!

John Huang  
July 2009



## Living theory: a student's process to clarity



Sounds promising, but it's a bit blurry



There are moments I nearly get it



I get it, then I loose it



Ahh Yes! I got it!



Marie Huxtable



**'Take up hope all ye who enter here'**

## **Three minds, we met**

a lawn in Midsomer Norton, mid summer 2005, me: mid-thesis  
enrolled elsewhere, stuck in the arid wastelands of someone else's data –  
so neat, so clean, so well-collected, so beautifully triangulated and controlled  
yet not mine.

Awash with data yet dry as bleached papyrus  
aloof upon the waters of my liquid trade (that I tried so hard to fix and still)  
half-drowned in careless ennui, I'd stalled.

You: you did philosophy with borrowed six-year-olds and later  
probed my stuckness with that Jackish grin of interest and concern.  
I chose my weapons, fenced and boxed: it seemed that you'd forgotten yours -  
you parried *the researcher's* distance with your personal Polanyi and met my  
nervous pugilism with a warm embrace.  
It went twelve rounds, that bout, but in truth I'd been love-dropped in the first  
and only noticed later.

And later still, and unmerited, and many times, you asked me in to share the  
moments that feed your life-force -  
those Buber-Bacchanalia (*All true living is meeting*) of people, drink and food,  
and deep-bellied laughter resonating through time.  
Each bears witness to the regular triumphs  
of life-filled process over dead-end product, and can't be held.  
Motivation is the motor of intelligence, says Dweck.  
True, and you knew too what went before –  
that love, and warmth, and life-affirming energy  
are the motors of motivation.

Thanks for that.  
It looks so crass, so puny and so glib, just 'Thanks for that'  
but, yet, thanks for that gift, Jack.  
This summer, and summers all -  
thanks for that  
Barry

## **My Dissertation and Me**

Before being introduced to Living Theory, I had intended doing my MA using traditional research methodology. I then met you, Jack, and I was introduced to a language I had not heard before in research – ‘embodied knowledge’, ‘life-affirming energy’, ‘educational influence in your own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations’. There was no going back! A living theory methodology was the way forward for my MA focussing on how I could improve my practice as an Inclusion Officer working in a Children’s Service. The journey began with writing narratives of my practice focussing on my values and inserting video clips accompanied by an analysis of what I was seeing as I presenced myself to myself and sought validation at Conversation Café.

The rest is history and I graduated at Bath Spa University on July 17 2009.  
Here I am with my family.



And what a fantastic do at the Boathouse that evening, dancing the night away with ‘fellow travellers’ who had embarked on that journey as I had done. Hope you like your poster and coffee mug, Jack. It looks as if you do!



Thank you, Jack, for your constant support, encouragement, and enthusiasm throughout. As my dissertation developed, so did I in being more and more confident and open to presenting the person that I am. I have completed a dissertation of which I am proud, but on my journey, I have made a very good friend.

Chris

## To Jack for introducing me to living theory

Before I worked with you, I had had several significant personal and professional experiences, which I was seeking to make some kind of connection between. It was a kind of conundrum: what is it that I know and how do I know what I know?

The exquisite dance of supervision: asking very good questions and gently lobbing up the odd reference to drift down and permeate into consciousness was what I experienced. The 100% commitment to my learning made me feel at times like I was giving birth to some of the most significant ideas of the time! I hasten to add that I have since come down to earth – a bit anyway!

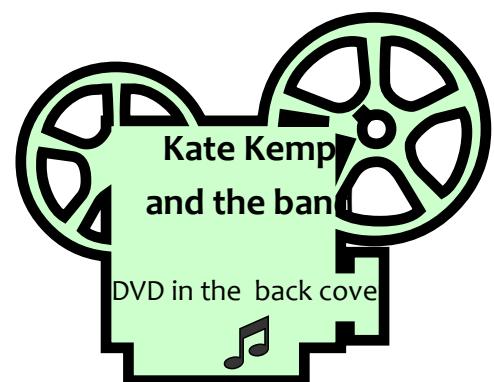
In terms of contribution and influence, writing a living theory thesis has enabled me to apply my research to two current pieces of work in the field of child protection: an action research evaluation of a domestic abuse recovery programme for children and their mothers; and a social worker retention action learning project. It is also potentially opening up new avenues: helping to improve the support given to servicemen and women returning from current conflicts, and to their families.

In this worthwhile work I feel content and energised at the same time: relishing the ‘inter human’ moments, and acknowledging the accountability and requirement to act (response-ability) we all have to each other and to the planet we share.

With immense gratitude for your part in my learning journey,

Love

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jocelyn".



## A Moral Tale

Whilst studying with Whitehead J  
In a dialectic marxist way  
I found my old perspective stray

Influencing my working days  
Objectively my subjective ways  
Changed as in this study phase

## Case Study 42

A student from the M.O.D.  
Placed a folder foolishly  
Into a pigeon hole per se.

A claim was made, the claim is fine,  
He claimed the pigeon hole was mine,  
I claim his claim was out of line.

The claim I make is that a hole  
Just isn't there it has no soul.  
I cannot therefore have a hole.

No wonder that his file was lost.  
I'm sorry for the human cost  
When into nothing work is tossed.

The moral's simple, just and fair.  
Don't blame holes if nothing's there  
Take work straight to the lecturer.

R.S.King

**What has the influence of my gradual and growing understanding of living educational theory and inclusional theory had on attempting to live my inclusional values working in higher education 1993 – 2009?**

In 1993 I completed my Masters degree in Education and was exploring how I might further my interdisciplinary research to PhD level. I had been fortunate to have a window of opportunity at the University of Wales to study across Art, Education and Psychology for my Masters and hoped to continue that inter-discipline path at higher level. My exploration took me to the door of Jack Whitehead's office in the University of Bath.

I remember the meeting so clearly, the warmth and friendliness with which I was greeted, the sense of life affirming energy in the room and with Jack himself. Jack quickly scanned my Master's dissertation and immediately identified some of the issues I had been grappling with, but had found to articulate. "How did you write it so poetically?" he asked.

I replied that at the same time as writing the thesis I had been writing a series of poems and had found it difficult to relate this to the objective writing required by the regulations for my Masters' thesis. Jack introduced me to the debates around subjective/objective dialogue in education. I read deeply and fully realised how and why my dissertation had been compromised by the archaic, and male, so-called objective academic approach. As a result the way I was writing my projects for the higher education course I taught on in an arts institute changed. The students reported they found it easier to identify with the content and briefs of the projects. Some of my colleagues felt the inclusion of the subjective in a design education was somewhat challenging. Architecture schools were beginning to recognise that the human experience had been excluded from design and new lecturers were enthusiastic about the approach. We ran a series of textural, sensual and emotive projects that were enthusiastically received by the students and that had some remarkable results in the quality of the students work.

A year or two later the further education college in which I worked was affected by changes in further education, including contractual requirements and the effective substantial losses incurred by lecturers. There were nationwide protests and I was unsure how best to proceed. I loved my work, but knew I would feel compromised if I accepted the new terms. I visited Jack to discuss potential PhD questions and discussed the situation with him. Jack suggested that an empowered way I could approach the circumstance was to

sign the contract and document the changes and the impact on my practice. This is what I chose to do. The ensuing years were challenging and significant and the course which I led was ultimately subsumed by another. The learning about academic values and practice I made during those years were vital and ultimately informed a change of direction in my career.

In 1995 I attended the first world congress on a living educational theory, held at the University of Bath. I began to understand how I am influenced by and how I influence those around me. I realised the importance of reflecting on whether and how I am living my values more fully in my practice. In 1997 I took a job in a University, a role which was half funded by policy change funding, to develop access for students with disabilities and dyslexia in the region and to provide learning support within the University.

The first three years were engaged in fulfilling a collaborative project brief which was demanding and inspiring. I was fortunate to work with colleagues from institutions around the UK, all engaged on attempting to facilitate a more accessible Higher Education system. I was also lucky to have colleagues, including Jack, across disciplines who embraced the changes social inclusion required and a growing team who worked hard to implement the change. Looking back I think I assumed the values of social inclusion were my values and my energy was focused on engaging with the difficulties a linear system had in changing to facilitate a more lateral approach. I believed that this struggle, as it turned out to be, was a socially just one and my passion was focused in challenging the academic norms and facilitating change with practical solutions, such as alternative arrangements for exams. Jack's presence and sustained commitment to hearing me and acknowledging the issues was vital in maintaining my ability to meet the challenges of this work.

In 2001 I met Alan Rayner and attended the Language of Water conference. The relevance of Inclusionary theory resonated strongly for my partner and myself with our attempts to engage with a living educational theory and to live our values more fully in our practice. The ideas strongly communicated by Alan that space is within and without us and we are part of our surroundings and an integral part of our environment, as our environment is an integral part of us, related immediately to the ideas of academic neighbourhood we were beginning to work with. Alan and Jack both agreed to participate in the Cascade conference, disseminating the outcomes of the inclusion project and sharing inter-disciplinary emerging theories and ideas. I began to understand the depth of connectedness and the relevance for systemic structures and

failures.

Any emerging theory struggles with a new vocabulary and the emerging Inclusional theory is no exception. I shared Alan and Jack's view that the meaning of words and language is essential for a full understanding of a theory. I worked with the central role of language in changing our understanding, the inclusion of she, for example, in academic constructs – which was at first derided and reluctantly accepted. The transformation in female experience as a result of including she is now evident. And the change in including the subjective "I" is central to Jack's living educational theory. I have difficulty still with academic debate, having to check in the dictionary for the meaning of semantics – 'the meaning of words'! I would like a glossary for the inclusional language – I tend to forget and it is frustrating because the words used are central to our understanding of the importance of inclusional theory at every level. Alan's alternatives for positive/negative; boundary/protection are central, but I still cannot remember the new emerging definitions. I know Alan finds it frustrating that I am taking so long to understand apparently simple aspects of the theory, but like writing a personal piece like this, I find that I understand things best with the lived experience and lived examples. Perhaps as our understanding of the theory grows we will be able to contribute a body of examples which will facilitate the growth in our understanding, and like any new movement there will be point where the flow swells and grows and our early frustrations and difficulties will be forgotten.

I particularly like the video of Alan talking with Eden Charles and describing the inclusional theory as beyond conflict, relating this to Ubuntu. Will Gosling also talked at the Cascade conference and he had developed a mine that worked electro magnetically without killing and maiming people. As our understanding has clearly not grown beyond conflict yet, we can hope that our growing understanding of a living educational theory and an inclusional theory will be our best hope. Jack shows in his loving approach and his clear dissemination of his values that by putting ourselves at the centre of our enquiry we can explore influences on ourselves and therefore on others. His beautiful videos of non verbal loving influence say more and validate work that is otherwise lost or communicated in a stilted way in academe.

In 2002 I went to a holistic leadership course and was advised that my attempts to implement lateral management in a hierarchical system would make my colleagues insecure. Feedback from my colleagues showed that this

was indeed the case and I decided to attempt to include my values within the hierarchical approach. I took this decision to an inclusional meeting with Jack and Alan and Alan was unimpressed with the idea, “well, we see how that works out” he said. I tried to include love as a value in our action plan. My colleagues were uncomfortable with the word but fully supportive of the values. We attempted to find alternative words and our action plan was better for them. Alan signs his e-mails warmest, while Jack signs his Love and I alternate between best wishes, kind, warm, and love. It has taken me several years to identify what loving values are and to feel more comfortable signing with love, though I still sign off with wishes to the hierarchy. Jack is so comfortable and clear in what he sees love to be and how he aims to live these values. I now realise I failed to clearly articulate my values and reflect on how I was living these in practice.

I got a bit stuck at this stage. Policies and management were changing, my attempt at hierarchy was successful up to a point and the resulting ambition (mine) and influence (negative) on my colleagues was evident in my work. I began to lose sight of living my values as more and more of them were pruned I accepted the loss and rationalised the reasons without being able to articulate my inner concerns. I have always struggled to find the words to express and validate my feelings and I went up the ladder but down in both my own estimation and that of my colleagues. Also my love and passion for the work began to diminish. I became ill.

In my own time I watched the videos of the Cascade conference and revisited my values. I managed, with struggle, to pull together the publication, and realised I had still not been able to fully address the language issue. I continued to write poetry and thought I had managed to write an inclusional poem, but Alan felt it was almost, but not quite, there. I began to try to return to my true values and challenge some situations with which I was uncomfortable. There was abundant negative feedback to this and to my practice. Jack was immensely supportive and his continuing insight and care was invaluable at a time of crisis for me. Inclusional and living educational theories hold hope that our experience, understanding and ‘common sense’ will find a voice against the madness of systemic failures and those who fully manage to live their values in practice are blessed. Jack’s contribution to holding hope for humanity in education is of inestimable value, and beyond thanks. Love ,

Morag

[www.bath.ac.uk/cascade](http://www.bath.ac.uk/cascade)