1976

An educative relationship in several scenes.

Dramatis Personae:

JW = Jack Whitehead

ML = Moira Laidlaw

(Speech; Thoughts; Dates and Places)

1991: at the University

JW: "I wonder if this might be a bit much but…"

ML: Sigh. Oh, not another bloody book! "Oh great! I'll read that one as well." I'm sure there's one hour in 24 not accounted for.

The following week in Jack's Office.

ML: "Those books were great, Jack. I've written a short story about dragons!"

JW: Oh great! NOT! What next, abduction by aliens? "Oh great! I'll read that one as well."

ML: Just a quick question, Jack. You know when you go on about values, yeah? What's the Holocaust got to do with education anyway?[1]

JW: You WHAT? Strewth! There's no hope!!!

1992: In the car on the way to Greendown School.

ML: "Jack, in an educative relationship, there has to be a degree of mutuality, doesn't there? So, what have you learned from me?"

JW: (Mm. Not a bad question, that. Something worth thinking about as an issue. Mm. What have I learned from her? Now, how can I put this

[1]What has the Holocaust got to do with Education anyway? A memorable question, eh? The paper I wrote about it can be found at **www.actionresearch.net/moira.**

delicately?)

"Nothing!"

1993 Spring; at Jack's House one evening

ML: "Jack, I'm sorry, but this Ph.D. is too much. I can't cope with it. I feel awful! It's dredging up such a lot of stuff."

JW: "This is up to you, of course and I'm not sure you will want to do it, but I wonder if you could look at it this way: that these feelings you're having are an integral part of the research... It would be a shame if you gave up. I think you (will) have something to say."

1993: Summer. In the University.

JW: "And so, using your talent for generating fictional stories that are recognisable as having the kinds of values you want to bring more fully into the world, you can begin to show in your educative relationships how you are bringing these values from your stories more fully into the" real "world. These will be…"

ML: "That sounds interesting." What's the matter with me? It really does!

1994: University, Jack's Office with other international colleagues discussing gifts and talents.

JW: "And what do you see as one of the gifts you have, Moira?"

ML: "Well, I suppose I write well."

JW: "Indeed, Moira, you write *very* well, and at length too! It's just a pity you have nothing to say yet!"

1995: Outside Director of Study's Office after Ph.D. Viva and private tantrum on having failed.

ML: "I'm not bloody giving up. I was amazing in there! I didn't know what I knew. I'm going to do it again and make *them* understand, that's why I want the same examiners. It was right that I failed. I didn't communicate to my audience."

JW: "I thought you should have got through this time."

I feel like shooting somebody!

1996: in Jack's Office after successful viva and bear-hug!

JW: "Congratulations, Dr. Laidlaw!"

ML: " *Thanks*, Jack!"

Coda

2000: At Jack's House

ML: I've decided to go on VSO to China.

JW: Great! What an opportunity. I'm delighted for you!

July 7th. University of Bath.
Celebration with action researchers before going to China

ML: I can't believe I ever said I didn't understand what the Holocaust had to do with education. It's taken you ten years to teach me that, Jack, though. Doesn't say much for your teaching methods, does it?

JW: You're a slow learner!

THE END

Dear Jack, Summer 2009

In 'Unfolding Bodymind' (Hocking, Haskell and Linds, 2001) Mary Bateson's writing is quoted as, 'the quality of recognition in any experience suggests a meeting of something already present…'.

After much angst, I came to understand our educational relations as one of joint detective work, seeking out and encouraging a mutual recognition of my living (e)pistemology, a shared exploration.

I think it took two, possibly three years, with me worrying about not understanding, being passionately inarticulate, then one day on the phone (you'd just come back from Canada) you said there was a book you thought I might read. It was 'Unfolding Bodymind'. Haa...aaa such a relief. You had found an example that might describe my way of learning, and it demonstrated not only that you had recognised what I was trying to put into words, but that this form of self study could be legitimated within the academy.

More recommended books and papers followed: Bernstein's 'Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity'; Thayer-Bacon's 'Relational "(e)pistemologies'" and Cho 'Lessons of Love: Psychoanalysis and the Teacher - Student Relationship'. Bloody marvellous Jack!

What more can I say, other than "thank you?"

I experienced and finally recognised your teaching as a form of patient, focussed, eccentric nurturing, which I could only understand in the living of it. I'm sure that the quality of your educational relationships means that your loving educational influence will continue to spread across continents, whether or not you remain within the Academy.
Jack, I feel truly honoured to know you and to have been one of your students.
With love,

Eleanor

A Visit to Ratcliffe on Soar:
What do action researchers do in their spare time?

I've thought long and hard. What can I say about Jack Whitehead and his influence on my career and interest in education? It is true to say that I wouldn't be where I am today were it not for "the man with the big laugh," as Kevin's daughters call him. It would also be true to say that I am no longer part of the action research community that has clustered around Jack. That is not in any way due to a lack of interest, political difference or any such thing. It is due to my health, the time and distractions.

So what are my main memories about working with Jack? Well, in the 1980s when I was undertaking my M.Phil research, Jack was something of a controversial figure. I was being supervised by one of Jack's colleagues, the excellent Mary Tasker. After a short time, Mary began to feel uneasy about supervising my work as she had little experience of action research. So she, Jack and I met to discuss what could be done. We thought that joint supervision would be a way forward and I made an appointment to meet and discuss this proposal with the Head of School. Of course, the proposal was turned down. Neither Jack nor Mary was surprised – perhaps for their own different reasons – but I was. It did not seem an unreasonable request and I thought it would have been helpful to me as a research student. On reflection, I wondered if this was some kind of lesson or initiation that I had to go through – recognise that educational research is a highly politicised process and that, if you want your approach to be accepted you would, as Kuhn suggested, have to wait for the dominant culture to die out.

The main confusion for me though was that I liked Jack. I still do. How could you not? How come he was seen as such a difficult, wayward individual whose research was not really research at all? His generosity, passion and genuine interest in improving education are contagious to the extent I always feel uplifted after a spell in his company. He taught me loads too. I remember conversations about books I'd read with Jack asking for the writer to show and account for his/ her own learning. That kind of request was instrumental in my research. I thought it was all pretty obvious – hard work but obvious that this was what education was really about. Clearly, according to some, I was wrong. And so was Jack.

I'm sometimes kind of sad that I haven't continued my research. You see, that means I don't have as much contact with Jack as I used to have. It was very exciting working with him on various conferences and hosting great debates with him. (Incidentally, I didn't feel as though I was all that influential in those events

but I did meet a lot of interesting people through Jack. That's another reason for feeling so much affection for him.)

But there are other, very strong reasons for liking this man and I'd like to share one memory of a night out with Jack and two of my dearest friends. At a BERA conference in Nottingham, Jack, Kevin Eames, Erica Holley and I had, under Jack's tutelage, presented some of our research in an action research symposium. Several of those attending were quite highly charged, shall we say, by the ideas and wanted to carry on the vociferous argument after the scheduled end of the session. We didn't exactly beat a hasty retreat but decided that we would seek refuge in a public house I had read about in "The Good Beer Guide." My interest in good English ale had led me to believe that a nearby hostelry served what was purported to be the strongest beer in Britain. Now, Jack always asked for a pint of the strongest beer in the pub whenever we went for a drink so the strongest beer in Britain was something of a lure. We called a taxi and all four of us set off.

The taxi driver had no idea where we were going and had to call his office for directions. We were heading for the cooling towers out at Ratcliffe but for all we knew we could have been taken to Loughborough or Long Eaton. Anyway, we arrived at the pub, paid the fare and marvelled at the awfulness of the village where we found ourselves. Once in the pub it was clear that an error had been made. It was kitschy, tatty and did not serve the strongest beer in Britain. Jack found this highly amusing and bellowed his infectious laugh. Missing out on the strong beer did not bother him at all – he was however delighted that I had made this error: that entertained him even more. I seem to remember him suggesting that I could do some action research into organising a piss up in a brewery. What was even more diverting for Jack was the moment the organist started playing his sing-along tunes of the "On Mother Kelly's Doorstep" variety. He absolutely loved this and began to, yes, you've guessed it, sing along. The vision I have of Jack Whitehead sitting in an armchair enjoying this moment so soon after being involved in a controversial research debate struck me as being quite bizarre. But it also strikes me as being typical of the man.

One last thought - is someone going to tidy Jack's office? What will they find? I guess there will be various nastiness in corners – furred coffee cups and the like. I also reckon that the new occupant will also find plenty of inspirational thoughts and dialogues lingering there. Unfortunately, I don't think a room of that kind can inspire as well as the person who occupied it.

Andy

I can’t imagine the living contradiction retiring

Pam

I first met Jack Whitehead

at a BERA Conference sometime in the 1980s. I had wandered into one of his sessions – not knowing much about action research. I can't quite remember who was there but I think Jean McNiff, Ron King, Andy Larter and Kevin Eames sat at a table at the front of the room with Jack in the chair. I thought they were quite inspired in the way they talked about improving education by investigating and changing their own personal practice. How refreshing after all the social science theory and jargon prominent at that time. Then, one of the old guard in the audience made some hostile and derisory remarks about action research, not properly critical but more a personal tirade against something they thought did not belong. I am not usually a knight in shining armour, but afterwards Jack told me that I rose to the defence like a crusader. After the session, Jack sought me out and invited me to meet his group. It was the beginning of a long and continuing friendship.

After that, I used to journey up to Bath on a Friday evening to join Jack's action research seminars. When I began to develop a group at Kingston, Jack became our consultant. For many years, he came down to Kingston on a Friday evening to give tutorials to the students. Then it was back to my house where my husband Ron had prepared supper for anyone in the group who wanted an extended action research session. I am not sure amid the haze of alcohol what we added to the theory of action research but I am sure it was profound and certainly living. The next day, Saturday we had the teaching sessions all day and then Jack returned to Bath, no doubt a little the worse for wear.

Through the years, Jack and I have collaborated on many action research projects and have given joint papers at Conferences. Together we organised the World Congress on Action Research at Bath in 1994. For that, we prepared a script to use in our joint address to the conference. I remember Jack going off at tangents – and me having to kick him to get him back to the script. At the end, we both thought it had gone very well. On another occasion, we organised a symposium at New Orleans, which went very well so I thought I was justified in taking an afternoon off to cruise on a river boat. But no! I had missed a session that Jack was chairing and I had holy hell to pay.

I left education as a career in 2002 (retired is not a word I like) and have moved to a new career (even less well paid) in local history and art history. On a recent visit to my home in Cornwall, Jack and Joan were taken by my husband Ron on a walk around the old water features of Newlyn as we were preparing a short history and guide book. Jack brought his video camera and took pictures. A week or two later I got the video in the post. It was an action research recording, with Jack exploring with Joan and Ron various aspects of the walk, suggesting alternative explanations, considering how the explanations were reached, always keeping the 'I' central to this living experience, which was embodied in the living explanations, which were theorised about the walk.

Good old Jack, he is determined that I should continue to explore the contradictions of my existence (whatever it is) to create a theory about my living self. No doubt he will always do so himself.

Pam Lomax

Newlyn, Cornwall

July 14 2009

Jack you have been a brilliant influence in my life. At first I thought you were crazy, now I realise you are a genius. I appreciate the way you allowed me to explore my inner self so gently and with such patience. I never knew I had it in me. It is a relief to realise that there is a whole world of people out there that value our passion as teachers and learners. It is a huge honour to work with you.

Anne Mackay.

Jack Whitehead

Jack Whitehead has been a seminal influence and a benign presence in my work and research for the best part of twenty years. His example has allowed me to speak and write in my own voice; to marry academic rigour to inwardness; and to trust in things not fully understood. Two pieces from Raymond Carver strike me as apt. I offer them to Jack with warmest affection.

Kevin Mc Dermott, Dublin June 2009.

Friends, I do love you, it's true.
And I hope I'm lucky enough, privileged enough,
to live on and bear witness.
Believe me, I'll say only the most
Glorious things about you and our time here!

From 'In the Year 2020'

Work

Love of work. The blood singing
in that. The fine high rise
of it into the work. A man says,
'I'm working. Or, I worked today.
Or, I'm trying to make it work'.
Him working seven days a week.
And being awakened in the morning
by his young wife, his head on the typewriter.
The fullness before work.
The amazed understanding after.
Fastening his helmet. Climbing onto this motorcycle
and thinking about home.
And work. Yes, work. The going
to what lasts.

Raymond Carver

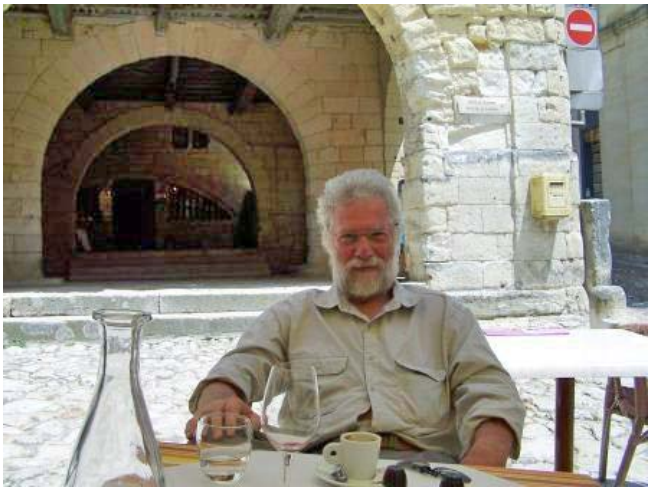
Jack

1991 – four people sat by the University lake staring into their sandwich boxes after the first session of the MEd taught module 'Action Research I'. After a period of silence and rumination, I looked at my likewise shell-shocked fellows and offered: "What the f*** was that? . . . What is my claim to have knowledge? . . . Can I make a valid claim that I understand my own educational development? . . . Dialectical logic? . . . Where's this guy from??" However, as so many before, and after, we each went on our ways and thought more deeply about these questions that Jack (for it was he) had asked us to ask ourselves – and we each came to realise their importance and significance to us as individuals and as joint participants in the great educational enterprise that is Life, the Universe, and Everything. We all became action research devotees and went on to study AR2 the following term and based our dissertations on action enquiries. We came to understand that this guy was something special, an opinion bolstered even further when we learned of the university's earlier, repeated and singularly unsuccessful attempts to dispose of him (Jack seemed to work this story into almost all of his papers written at that time).

"How can I improve the quality of my practice?" – it looks so innocent, as a question, but . . . action research claims to be an emancipatory activity: "...a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality, justice, coherence, and satisfactoriness of (a) their own social practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the institutions and programs and ultimately the society in which these practices are carried out. Action research has an individual aspect – action researchers change themselves, and a collective aspect – action researchers work with others to achieve change and understand what it means to change." (McTaggart 1992) .

Jack has always talked about the 'Life-affirming energy' that flows around groups engaged in generating descriptions and explanations of their own Living Educational Theories. In the light of my own experience, I would suggest that the generation of life-affirming energy requires that you look at things differently and so requires a spark of life-changing energy to set it free.

By asking his 'How can I/we . . . ' questions, Jack is the source of that spark – and his spark has lit a flame that now runs around the world and makes it a better place. After staring into my damascene sandwich box in 1991, things were never quite the same again.



Me post lunch in Saint-Emilion. You may be amused to dwell on the fact that it shows a happy and replete man who has just consumed a large cauldron of moules frittes - and who does not yet know that one of them was duff.

16 July 2009

Jack Whitehead has inspired me. It was not until I read his article "Using a Living Theory Methodology in Improving Practice and Generating Educational Knowledge" located on www.ejolts.net that I truly understood what I had been doing during these past 33 years as a teacher and as an administrator. His quest to change our understandings of teacher research, to make it real and to help us to hear the voice of the teacher researcher has been a noble quest indeed. His understanding of what it means to be human and what it means to hold professional knowledge within the context of "life-affirming energy" illustrates his deep understanding of our inner desire to make sense of our world, not just in a scientific context but in an emotional context as well.

Peter

Jack understands that learning happens not just in one's head but in one's heart and that this connection must be present for real understanding to occur.

Thank you Jack, for all you have fought for-for it was your heroism that will pave the way for many teachers to come as they ask their own question: "How can I improve my practice?"

Ruth

Dear Jack,

You have taught me the true meaning of education. Until entering your classes I had become adept at jumping through hoops to pass the relevant exam or assignment. Yet the learning that has had the biggest impact on me and has remained with me is the learning process that I have undertaken in your class. Why? This is because the enquiry that I conduct is an enquiry that has relevance and meaning to me. It is about the way in which I make sense of the world and not someone else's sense making. This does not mean that it is any the less challenging - in fact it is more so. I have never been more motivated, moved, depressed and invigorated whilst creating my own living theory. Surely ensuring that individuals are able to relate their learning to their life experience is the nub of education.

A big thank you.

Love,
Mary

Thoughts on Jack Whitehead from Marian Naidoo

My first contact with Jack was completely by chance. I had returned to further education after many years and was struggling with the MSc in Social Research at the University of Bath. I was required to undertake two pieces of research, one of which had to be quantitative and the other qualitative. I had successfully completed the quantitative work and had started to draft an outline for a piece of action research. I had been advised to find an additional supervisor with an expertise in this field. I had no idea how to go about this and in desperation rang the switchboard and asked to be put through to a member of staff who can help with action research. The operator paused for a moment and then replied, "Oh I think you want Jack Whitehead".

That thoughtful introduction from the switchboard operator became quite a significant moment in relation to me as a learner and my introduction to living theory. Like many adult returners, I had become under confident and was beginning to doubt my ability to achieve a Masters. Here I am ten years later having achieved that and with Jack's help and support as my supervisor I also managed to successfully complete a PhD.

In the introduction to my PhD thesis, I make this comment about Jack's influence:

> *"I would also like to thank Jack Whitehead, my supervisor. Jack you are the most inspirational teacher I have met. You have shown me how to have confidence in both what I do and what I write about and you have undertaken that in a beautifully sensitive way."*

What Jack helped me to do was to find a confidence to look critically at myself as a practitioner and to develop an understanding of what my practice is and through this understanding find ways to do it better. It also enabled me to see and understand where I had been able to influence through my embodied knowledge.

Finding Living Theory for me was like coming home – it made perfect sense. In the work that I was engaged, bringing creativity into healthcare improvement, more traditional methods of research were inappropriate. Through the application of living theory, I was able to develop a new epistemology of inclusional and responsive practice.

Jack's support, expertise and challenge throughout this period helped me to stay with it. I was working in a very challenging environment and without Jack's support I would have given up. On many occasions I approached my supervision sessions ready to say I did not think I could continue – I had a full time job and two young children, how can I do this as well. I always left the session knowing that I ***could*** carry on and be successful.

We also had a lot of fun and there are a couple of moments that still make me laugh and this is one of them – Jack encouraged me to think about bringing theatre into my supervision session. At the time I had two supervisors and I knew that this would be a challenge to the other more traditional supervisor. I had developed a character based on research I was doing with carers of people with dementia. I came to the session as that character who was experiencing difficulty with her husband's care and wanted to challenge the staff in the day centre. The problem was Jack was delayed and the other supervisor had not read the email telling him I was going to do this. As I launched into a tirade about the poor quality of care and what I wanted him to do about it he moved further and further into the corner until he eventually worked up the courage to put his hand up and shouted ***"Marian – I don't know what you are doing – but can you please stop."*** I stopped mid flow and the awful realisation hit me, we looked at each other for a couple of seconds and then I fled. I ran out into the corridor where I collapsed into a helpless heap of laughter. I never saw that young man again.

Finally, in the theatre we have something called the magic moment. With

traditional forms of evidence and data collection, it would be very difficult to capture but with the use of film, this is becoming possible. I wanted to include the photograph below because in my research this captured one of these magic moments. Jack I know you are particularly fond of this moment and you helped me to understand and articulate how through this piece of film I was living my embodied value of a passion for compassion.

Thank you Jack for your support and inspiration and may we find many more magic moments in the future.
Love,
Marian

Bear Flat, Bath
July 2009

Dear Jack,

My story is similar to so many. I want to tell it because it is the similarity that tells so much about the constancy of you Jack to everyone you meet. I struggled for a year to find a research question/methodology that would fit the requirements of a health care faculty and answer what I really wanted to know about improving the family lives of children. At last I heard what my friend Jacqui Hughes had been saying. 'Go and see Jack'. You were helping her resubmit her thesis because of similar paradigm difficulties in another branch of the education faculty. With Joan you welcomed me into your front room and listened to my bleat. My emotion so brimmed it was hard to speak. You said I had important knowledge as a passionate practitioner and my enquiry should be encouraged. Months later this is what I taped recorded you saying in the Thursday group,

> *'At the moment the power behind what counts as knowledge is in the academy. It is not in the form of knowing that you have. I genuinely do believe that you have the form of knowledge I am interested in helping to make public. If we were to take the view that you are starting to work with parents of young children and the 'knowing' they have is developmental. It's emergent, but never the less is actually superior to the 'knowing' that is in the academy at the moment about what you are interested in. You would have the personal and professional knowledge together* (parents and me). *We* (the academy) *would be the learners. Over a few years our task would be to learn what it is for you and your parents to become good parents with your help and support. We would be subordinate, in terms of our learning to the personal and professional knowledge which you and the parents actually have, as you are working with the child, to become better parents'.* (7.10.96)

I allow myself to cry now when I read those words. You changed my future and bolstered my resilience to be someone who knew something useful and to stay for all of my career in front line community work. You helped me find a new supervisor, **Martin Forrest,** in the education faculty at UWE. He was a true gentle man not the least bit phased by our informal arrangement and smoothed my process.

Your unstinting generosity is truly remarkable to me. You included me as if one of your students in the weekly research group sharing resources and giving me equal opportunity to present and debate even though I was registered elsewhere. You received not a penny from the time and energy you gave to the seven years it took to get me to submission. I feel sure you will say something like, 'but your enquiries are my enquiries and I am learning too'. I believe this is true. You showed your democratic impulse *lived* and I am indebted to the experiencing of it. For me lyrics from the '*Midnight Cowboy*' echo the contrast between my experiences.

Everybody's talking at me
I don't hear a word they're saying
Only the echoes of my mind...
I'm going where the sun keeps shining
Through the pouring rain
Going where the weather suits my clothes
Banking off of the north east winds
Sailing on summer breeze
Skipping over the ocean like a star.

(Neill, 1969)

I feel at home in living theory action research, where what I believe does not look out of place. I hear what people are saying and expect challenge and vigorous debate. The climate of warmth and acceptance is energising so like you, I continue to learn. It is because I feel safe that I can be open to challenge and grow.

Thanks Jack,
Robyn

Acknowledgement of Gratitude Dr Ram Punia

I wish to thank Dr. Jack Whitehead, my supervisor, for encouraging me to pursue my EdD inquiry I undertook with some reservations but it ended with results beyond my expectation. I have known Whitehead for the last ten years. Unfortunately I came to understand his form of action research recently. He calls it 'living educational theory from of action research'. According to him Living educational theories provide the accounts of educators in their learning and the influences on the learning of others. I found that it is particularly suitable for the EdD awards designed for the making of professional educators with technical competence and character based on high values in life.

According to Whitehead professional educators embody high level of competence and character based on universal values. I failed to understand his work for a long time due to my spiritual background and Eastern upbringing. I believe in universal Self/I operating all around us. I do not believe in an individual I/self. For me it is simply a bundle of memories acquired from the time we are born. Jack insisted on placing I/self in the centre of inquiries. Hence, we seemed to have conflicting ontological differences. I have learnt from my EdD inquiry that the development of Individual self is also the development of the universal self as a co-creating process as a form of living educational theory form of action research. I now propagate this form of action research to generate self-knowledge.

Whitehead has a gift to recognise the embodied living educational theories of educators when they remain implicit to them. He suggested to me to explore my rich professional life as an international educator to fulfil an important gap in the professional knowledge base in this area of education. My EdD inquiry would allow me to make my embodied knowledge explicit to share it with academics and with practitioners.

I found it difficult to understand Whitehead's work from his academic writings. I understood his work from prolonged personal discussions and his embodied values. I believe to understand his living educational theory for of action research one has to know Jack as well. He is the embodiment of it. Our shared perception of the need for character based on universal values of life as an integral aspect of technical competence led him to supervise my EdD inquiry. Jack has a unique style of supervision of his students' research. He does not treat them like students: he treats them like colleagues- nay like close friends. As

his student I often dropped in his office without making an appointment knowing that I would always be welcomed with a broad smile and a hug.

I usually went to him to test my own insights and to generate new insights during our professional dialogues. In my professional career I have had such dialogues with only a few people and Jack is one of them. Our dialogues were not planned: they occurred naturally. I believe they can only occur amongst like-minded people sharing similar values in human life.

During my professional life I was known as a consultant in curriculum and staff development. But I considered my I/self a curriculum developer engaged in identifying, creating learning opportunities for myself and for others who cared to work with me. However, few educators shared this conception of curriculum development with me. I was delighted to find that Jack has a better name for curriculum developers. He calls them professional educators.

He is a professional educator who spent his life as an academic at a university with expertise in generating learning spaces for himself and for his students. I spent my life as a consultant in the international context creating learning spaces for myself and for my colleagues engaged in solving professional problems. I learnt from Jack that professional educators are those who can improve what they are doing but they do it for the right reasons. According to my understanding living educational theory form of action research Jack has invented aims to achieve this goal. The living educational theories of his students at the university of bath provide enough evidence to show the professional significance of this form of action research. I found that while Stephen Covey (1990) and (2004) provides excellent propostional knowledge to live by for leadership in all organisations to live in the world of this century, the work of Whitehead and his colleagues provides living examples of professional educators who are living Covey 1990, 2004 prepositional knowledge.

I close with my usual madness. I believe nothing is destroyed in this living universe. The seed jack has sown will grow into a huge tree when the time and place is ready. Words do not capture my thoughts adequately. Jack is much more than that. I wish him well in his new life. We do not retire until we leave this world. Life is a non-ending journey with endless transitions always taking us forward.

With love and Regards as always, Ram.

A Poem

By Swaroop Rawal

Standing alone
at the Worcester station
waiting for the train to take me to London
waiting for the train of thoughts, action
to take me
to the land of professional knowledge
waiting
waiting
waiting alone
that was when I first met Jack Whitehead
through the tons of reading material
which would help me understand the mysteries of research

I am glad I met him by myself
it makes him more mine
than if somebody had introduced him to me

As I write
the wet dark monsoon of today
reminds me of a similar 'that day'
as if the monsoon days are
here and
there too
making his *janambhumi* my *karmabhumi*
truly removing borders
a common world of people with similar values.

That day I read a line
"How can we make our practice as a teacher more effective"
and got hooked
read the paper
understood some thoughts
others flew over
read
read
read
incessantly and

then read some more
from the library of living theories

I was so alone
alienated in my *janambhumi*
'not first-rate', they said
'not a PhD'
'where' is the 'research
'why this'
'to what purpose'
but JW
helped me survive
helped me find a voice
empowered me

'I' as a living contradiction-
enabled me to look at my fallible pedagogy
I was freed of my anxiety
I could look intently in my work
my evasions and clichés
I could look at my untapped resources and
realise that the time had come
when I had to give myself the answers
answers to why there were gaps
gaps in what I believed in and the actions I carried out

I met him in his library
without actually telling he told me -
my values were correct.
my desire to improve was valid
the methods I tried were up to mark.
and when one of my supervisors feared I would fail
I read his papers a hundred times
to understand
to change
I began to understand my '*dharma*'

Today I have won a skirmish in the 'battle of snails'
But 'my' *Mahabharata* still rages on
I pray JW continues

continues holding his space
continues holding his values for social justice
continues
continues…..
I remember a bhajan I sang as a child….
'Jyot Se Jyot Jagate Chalo
Prem Ki Ganga Bahate Chalo
Raah Mein Aaye Jo Deen Dukhi
Sab Ko Gale Se Lagate Chalo….
Dharti ko Swarg banake chalo'

Glossary

janam-bhumi: motherland or land of ones birth. Janam means birth

karma-bhumi : Land of karma, Karma takes it meaning from kamma which means "to do", meaning deed or action, effect, destiny. bhuumi means land.

Dharama: http://www.hinduism.co.za/dharma.htm#What%20is%20Dharma?

Bhajan: a Hindu devotional song

Translation of- *Jyot Se Jyot Jagate Chalo* You can listen to it on -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-klcwFRgwvI&feature=related

Jyot Se Jyot Jagate Chalo: with one flame go on and give life to another flame

Prem Ki Ganga Bahate Chalo: enable the Ganges (river) of love to flow

Raah Mein Aaye Jo Deen Dukhi: the sad and the downtrodden you meet on your way

Sab Ko Gale Se Lagate Chalo: embrace them as you walk on

Dharti ko Swarg banake chalo: Make this earth into heaven as you walk on

Reference

Papers by Jack Whitehead: http://www.actionresearch.net/writing.shtml
The library of living theories: http://www.actionresearch.net/living.shtml

A Twinkling in His Eye

A Tribute to Jack Whitehead from Alan Rayner

A twinkling in his eye
Sparked
Instantaneous recognition
Of common concern
Undermining wordy barricades
Between worlds
Divided by loyalty

My paper danced
And swayed his thoughts
From dialectic contradictions
To shimmering pools of grass
Glistening with the darkness
That takes light into loving seclusion
Easing its painful lacerations
Of each moment suspended in animation

Those cracks between the slabs
Where conformity rules
And love slips away
Secretively
To where none can know its meaning
Beneath contempt
Become cracks where love resurfaces

No longer gaps of disinterest
But pooling all together
Withstanding their differences
Through that vital kind of tolerance
That comes naturally
In living surges

Where no ripple is out of place
In the flow that keeps its self in the heart of itself
Through endless circumnavigations
Of meaning within meaning
Never without meaning
But drawn into cameos of self-reflection

Caught on camera
Flowing out
Whilst gathering in
What it means to be included
In what it includes
As a gift passing on

Where retiring means refreshing
The notes in the staves
That sing out in chorus
From their silence within
Where darkness glistens
In the pool that breathes in

I sat in the classroom confused.

It was 5 o'clock on a chilly November evening in 2002 and I could have been at home with a tea (or most likely a beer). I looked at the research paper in front of me and rubbed my eyes in frustration.

Yet over the weeks of that first Master's module with Jack at the helm, a community developed between us, the likes of which I have not seen again. Where there was confusion, there was enlightenment. Where there was discord, there was hope for the future. Above all, there was laughter and meaningful conversations between us that allowed each of us to consider what was important to us. We all emerged from that first Module differently. I saw differently, felt different and understood in a new way.

This is how Jack has been a part of my life. From confusion, I have emerged positive and hopeful. He would say that he has never had an influence over anyone else, but his influence has been to see the positive in people and encourage them to take new steps forward.

Daniel Cho (2005) speaks of a love in education; in that this love is lived out as people venture into the world together on a shared journey of discovery.
Thank you Jack for letting me share that journey with you.
Thank you for giving me the courage to love and to live.
I shall always carry with me the warmth of our conversations as well as the hope for humanity that you have given to me.

Dr Karen Riding
Director of MFL
Parkstone Grammar School

I first met Jack

whilst beginning my Masters through Bath University 10 years ago. At the time I was a young and inexperienced teacher who had no idea about research.. Jack tutored me through my Masters and introduced me to 'Living Educational Theory'. I didn't understand it then, and to be honest I didn't understand most of what Jack said. But I pretended that I did. However, he did change things in my life forever.

I then carried on with my doctorate and recently graduated with my wife from Bath. About 6 months ago, after my viva, I suddenly realised what 'Living Educational Theory' is: the penny dropped. It had only taken me 10 years!

This in itself seems minor compared to a life time of dedication to changing an institutional perception of research. What Jack has done for me is to empower me to do what I do better. He has helped my light to shine brighter than it ever has.. My students have benefited as I have made their lives better.

A tutor. A friend.
Thanks Jack
Dr Simon Riding

Reflections and Memories of Jack

The four qualities that I most associate with, and most remember about Jack, are his persistence, warmth, humour and dedication.

I don't think I have known anyone who has taken a set of ideas and so persistently, consistently and insistently worked with them. This could easily take a person into obsession, and does for some, but what I think saves Jack from this is his huge warmth and sense of humour.

The great thing about working with Jack and encountering his conviction and thoroughly worked out set of ideas is that it forces one to set out one's own stall. This can either be within the terms of the framework and set of ideas that Jack has developed, in that I think working with him demands that one defines as clearly as possible what one's own living values are and what is the animating spirit, ideas and purpose for what one is working. Or, if it is not within Jack's unique framework, it then becomes necessary to define one's own framework.

In the acknowledgement to Jack at the beginning of my PhD, I expressed a similar thought:

"I would like to thank Jack Whitehead for his unflagging commitment to educational values and for acting as an anvil on which I have hammered out the ideas and practices in this thesis and forged my own stance."

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Jack for a number of years during my Doctorate to help me define better what I stood for, and sharpen my thinking about where I agreed with him, and how I differed from him. This was never an easy or smooth ride, but always a stimulating and enriching one. It was like an encounter with a relentless, unyielding granite-like force, (the 'anvil') which forced me to define myself and take my own shape.

I believe that Jack has offered me a great model of what it is like to be genuinely and passionately committed to education. I think he is a great educator and has had a huge influence on all those who have come into

contact with him. His web-site is the obvious testimony to this. It is both consistent with Jack's ideas about finding appropriate forms for people to show their values in action, and also indicates the extent of his influence on many talented people, who have used his ideas and support to forge their own educational journey.

I have many vivid memories of Jack. The extraordinary clutter that was his office (I think he might have been competing with Francis Bacon's art studio for creative messiness) and the way he would delve into the clutter to find tea bags, coffee and chocolate biscuits. His delight in the success of his students. His pleasure in expounding ideas or showing a particularly significant clip of video. His willingness to go the extra mile for people.

For example, one time he arranged for me to have a mock viva at his house a few days before my real PHD viva. We were both shocked at my inability to answer the questions that had been posed to me about my thesis by Judi Marshall, with her customary incisiveness – an inability that had rendered me almost mute in the mock viva – but Jack somehow managed to have faith, and on the day of the real viva, I found the fluency and the words that I had been looking for. It was strange to see Jack so quiet during the viva - as this was the role required of him - but then he burst into his customary exuberance when I was told that I had achieved my Doctorate and would not be required to do any additional writing.

It is very hard for me to imagine Jack retired in a traditional sense – pottering around the garden, reading the newspapers, smoking a pipe by the fire. And I am sure this is not what he will be doing. He just has too much energy and commitment to education to be idle in this field.

Whatever he decides to do now, I wish him all the best

With love and affection

(Dr) Paul Roberts

Dear Jack,

It seems odd to be writing to you like this – as if a whole era has come to an end. I suppose it has in some ways. But I can't help feeling that something deep down has changed, that all the thousands of conversations we've all shared are somehow gathering together to create an enormous ground-swell of new meaning.

The concept of a 'living theory' now lies firmly at the base of my professional practice, giving me both courage and voice as I stride out into a changing world and seek to have a small part in influencing the system for good. Without it I would never have know the strength of my own voice - but at times it has felt utterly overwhelming, as if I was trying to squeeze my life into a set of concepts that didn't really fit. I remember sitting in one of the chairs in your office, trying not to fall through where the seat was coming away, and wondering what having a 'living theory' really meant. I'd feel so convinced by the end of the session – and then find myself screaming "no, no!" at every car on the motorway as I realised I hadn't understood it at all. I rarely got beyond Swindon before it happened.

You tried explaining it over and over again, aided and abetted by Buber and Polanyi. Buber finally hit the spot. But for some reason my clearest memory is of a quotation from the translation of Beowulf, where the sentence starts with "So..." I find myself echoing it with clients, when I want to help generate a space in which they can explore so much more than they know. The power of that isolated and weighty 'so' carries such possibilities.

I can see you now, smiling as you balance a mug of coffee on your knee, the PhDs overhead sagging on the shelves. When 'living theory' didn't work we moved on to 'standards of judgement', an even vaguer notion it seemed to me at the time. You seemed so passionate about it all, as if the very principles of your life were rooted there. And of course they were, and still are, and will no doubt continue to be. I think that's when I finally got it, when I understood the passion behind it. To live life as a 'living theory' is to celebrate our own liberty, to know that we know, to know how we know, and to shout it out with our own voice.

It took me another year to get 'standards of judgement' to the same degree. I'm afraid the very notion of judgment and validation blocked my capacity to even explore the possibilities. But I had at least found my own expression of 'exquisite connectivity' by then, affirmed each and every time that you have cross-referenced it over the last seven years. Those reminders have been precious to me – thank you.

I remember when you took my photograph. You wanted to share my smile with me. You thought it would illustrate the point – and it did. It was a small gesture – but a gift with immense meaning.

The elusive 'standards of judgment' did finally turn up. They simply emerged one day, unexpected and unannounced. You seemed unimpressed, taking it all in your stride – I however was ecstatic! Over the years they have played an increasingly important role in my practice, providing both method and framework for a deep appreciation of our collective potential.

I do have a confession to make. I was in a meeting recently trying to explain to colleagues the difficulties I've been seeing clients grappling with recently. I was stuck for a way in which to describe the tensions implicit in their 'system' – and only one expression could adequately describe it. As the words 'living contradiction' floated into the air I smiled. Wisdom had finally caught up with me and I'd cracked the one outstanding concept I'd never managed to adopt.

Thank you Jack – for helping me start out on the journey.

Jacqueline Scholes-Rhodes

Retire, Relax, Refresh – let life begin anew

By Lere O. Shakunle

Retire! Let the Box and Bottle
Take care of the Lolling Dulling Hours
Whatever of them is still left to fill. Good Bye!
Says Officialdom – Official Way of Walking Tall,
Laughing Funny, Mocking Smile, Straight Look, Dry Joke.
Which has been Counting Days, Days which are The Same
Product of Parrot and Business-As-Usual, Counting Out
Since the Day the Contract Was Signed and Sealed.

Retire! Go to Waste!
Like is done the Bottle when the Content is Gone
Or the Box when the Nuts and Bolts Jingle and Jangle
To put an end to the Reel of Rigmarole
To which Official Tables and Desks Cry Alas
Because now, what is going to become of It -
Its Prediction, Its Prescription, Oh, Its Expectation
Of Retirement as Wasteland
When People like You – Dear Jack
See Retirement for what Officialdom never Can Understand
As Going to Bed after the Day's Work
To Relax, Refresh, Wake and Begin Anew

Relax Jack – Before you Begin Anew!
After leaving the Market of Cut-Throat Competition
In which the Wise Ones are the Clever Ones
Who know how to Interpret and Deliver
The Official Document, the Manifesto, the Ideology
That Stifle Intellectual Progress and Punishes Wisdom Divine
With the Few shouting Atop the Hills
Grabbing the Funds for what is mostly Conventional Rant
But to be Candid – With Some Facts if not the Truth in it -
That Block the Minds Untainted
With What they cannot Question
Even when their lily-fresh Hearts Tell them

This Cannot be True
You Know, Having Passed Through it all
What All this Means – My Dear Jack

Reborn! Welcome to a New Day
Now the Points of Euclid
That Begin and Terminate – and Presto!
There is the Line -
A Line that renders Life into Modules
Of Countdowns –
Start, Stop and Final
Begin, End and Fizzle
Can now be seen for what it is –
The Language of Officialdom
Work, Retire, Go To Waste – Quick
Another is Waiting on the Line
Making old the youthful Mind
Rendering into a Desert with a doting Dole
A Mind, like the Muse, in which Time Stands Still
Where the Reality of the Case is –
Creativity is ever young, Bringing Forth the New
A New Earth and Heaven of New Opportunities
To which you worked, Oh, this labour of Love
To which you Contributed with the Product of the Intellect
And with this – My Friend Jack

Welcome! Freedom at Last!
Now in your own Home –
In the Soil and Solace of Freedom
The Very Heart of Creativity
You can Nurse Your Gift to the World
That Special Contribution to Education
And Relax in what never can Retire
Because it never Can Be Retired
But shall forever like Cycles in Nature
Be reborn each time it is Revisited
By the New Generation of Students

And Lovers of Knowledge that is True Everywhere.
Yes to The Young and Receptive Soil -
To whom the language of Officialdom sounds strange indeed
And it is Strange Indeed -
The Truth Remains
The new world now and to come
Never can see official Retirement
Because there is nothing like that
But retirement like going to sleep, to relax and wake up
In the fresh rose of your Living Education Theory - your LET

Welcome! To Hurrahs Infinite
To us who are toasting today
Your kind of Rare Courage, Commitment
Indeed Dream –
And Who Only Can See and Say
Our Dear Jack – Welcome
To the Immense Opportunities
Of Open Geometry – Transfigural Geometry
In which there are no points of Beginning nor End
And life remains Open as Opportunities

Welcome Indeed, this new Baby
This your New Cycle of Life
In which after you have Relaxed –
And now as Fresh as Lily-
You Can Now Continue
To Develop your LET
In which your Voice Remains, a Pride to Humanity
And shall Forever Shall Be in what knows of
And in Which it Does Not Exist
The Sommersault of Reality, Officialdom

Retirement of Official Goodbye, the Waste.
But Retirement, the Reality of the Return of the Soul
To the Land of the Child, the Beginning of a New Cycle We Can See
That brings with it Rebirth, Growth, yes, hoopla-hopla of Joy To Education
As Promised by Yours Truly,
Living Education Theory

Prost, Cheers to LET
Oh, Jack, Our Good Friend
It's been such Special Kind of Pleasure
That Our Paths Cross for the Grand and the Good
Through Whom it does not Matter Now
Oh it Matters!
Yes, it indeed Matters that We Come Together
In the Struggle – This Struggle that You Know –
The Ongoing Struggle for Which We Need
What We have been Saying all Along –
Retire, Relax, Refresh and Let Life Begin Anew

My Salut!
o

Lere O. Shakunle
Transfigural Mathematics
Berlin, Germany

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As seen on Skype

Eye and Fellow Traveller

Action research as story: my tribute to Jack Whitehead

One day I came to the edge of a cliff. There seemed no way forward, and the way back was blocked by a strange and faceless creature that stood with his huge arms stretched across my path.

"Only members of the Laurel Crown Club may proceed," he said.

"Which Club is that?" I cried, tired from all my many travels, "and how can I join it?"

"You join it by following my dance, step by step, and after each step, proving you are as good as I am."

"But that's ridiculous," I said. "Why should I want to do that? Look, here is the garland of the storyteller, woven by myself from a thousand stories."

"That is nothing," said the creature.

"And here is the crown of the teacher, made of shells excavated from a thousand shores and threaded together with spun learning."

The faceless creature laughed a bitter icy laugh.

"None of these will bring you the Laurel Crown, because none of the steps are like mine," he crowed. "Without this, how do I know you are good enough to continue the journey?"

"Because of all the journeys I've already travelled!" I shouted. "The bridge-building journey, the river-crossing, the boat-making, the flower-blooming, the story-making, the wisdom-excavating journeys. Do none of those count?"

"None are mine!" yelled the creature. "And I, Thought Doctor, am the only one that can lead the way. Take my journey or none at all."

"OK, if you must, show me the way then. Since I have travelled so far, I might as well do this further journey."

Thought Doctor pointed with his long bony finger towards the hills. I noticed a long narrow track like a railway that burned an unbending route through the valleys, tunnelled through the hillside, and plunged into the woods the other side.

"That's it," he said. "You follow me, along the track, copying my dance, and at the end you win the crown."

The journey seemed possible, and better than throwing myself over the cliff. But still, it did not seem a very exciting or useful way to travel, with so much landscape to explore on either side of the narrow track, and so many ways to explore apart from following his single step. And how would I carry with me all the garlands, sarongs, shells, and songs of previous journeys, if I was not allowed to offer them and share them on the way?

I threw myself down onto the grassy ground to think about my options. As I did so, I noticed appearing from behind Thought Doctor's cloak, a silent group of people, cloaked, pale and downcast, gathering around me on the cliff.

"We are members of the Laurel Crown Club," they said.

I looked at them now as they stood nearer me.

"But you all look the same!" I cried.

"When we started we were all different," one of them said, "but by the end we have all learnt Thought Doctor's moves so well, we look just like him."

"Here!" said one, and threw off his hood to reveal a shiny metallic crown that looked far too heavy for him and made him stoop forward.

"Here!" said another, and revealed the same metallic shiny crown but it was so large it kept dropping over her eyes, and she had to push it up every few minutes.

"Here!" said another, and there was the crown again, but every so often the poor owner picked up a corner and began scratching underneath, shifting it round so it would sit more comfortably.

"None of your crowns fit!" I cried, concerned for them.

They laughed in chorus, like a pond of hippopotami.

"Of course not. There's only one size crown. If it doesn't fit, well that's just too bad. They all need to be the same size, to make sure it's all fair."

"But being just the same size makes it NOT fair," I cried.

Thought Doctor rolled his eyes, exasperated, and turned away.

"She clearly doesn't understand," he snorted. "Come, Club, let's leave her here to think."

I sat by the cliff edge, suddenly alone, and looked in both directions. In one direction was a sheer drop down to a fast running river gorge. On the other was the Laurel Crown track, long and straight, with bunches of flowers every so often along the route where travellers had failed to survive. What to do? Now, with the Thought Doctor gone, there seemed to be many more possibilities. Looking again at the landscape ahead, it seemed laughable that there should be only one track forwards; on the contrary, there seemed to be an infinite number of paths, and surely nothing would stop me exploring them?

Encouraged by this thought, I stood up and again reviewed my options. In one direction was open hillside scattered with a blue dusting of heather; in the other direction was the path I had come from, winding over the cliff edge and dropping back down to a chain of rocky bays. I chose the new direction, the open hillside. Surely, if I set foot there, Thought Doctor wouldn't stop me?

So I began the new path, into the blue heather and the unmarked terrain. It was welcoming underfoot, and comforting to walk inland away from the cliff edge, wading through the tall grass, not knowing where it would lead me. After a while, as I walked, I suddenly became aware that there was a Fellow Traveller quietly beside me, and like me, quietly tracing the path of the wild flowers. I looked up to take note of him, and to my surprise, saw he was wearing a crown too.

"Oh! Your crown fits!" I cried.

"Of course it does," said Fellow Traveller. "I made it myself."

We carried on walking, quietly for a while.

"But is it a Laurel Crown, like the others?"

"Yes, of course it is."

"But did you do that long journey, like the others?"

"Yes, yes I did," said the Traveller patiently.

"But how is it you don't look just like all the others? How is it you have strayed off the track?"

"Well I worked out the route for myself."

"Is that allowed?"

"Of course it is. That's what I did, and I have a Crown and it fits just fine."

I could see that all of those things were true. It seemed an exciting and revolutionary way to become a member of the Club.

"Could you show me how I might get a Crown that way too?"

"Sure, of course."

We carried on walking, and the Fellow Traveller didn't seem to be showing me anything at all, but just following where I went along the hillside.

"But you aren't showing me. Shouldn't you be showing me the way?"

"No, quite the reverse. You choose which way you want to go, and I'll come along with you."

"Are you sure? " I asked, nervously. It all seemed so different to Thought Doctor.

"Look, the end of the journey is over there." He pointed beyond the wood where the narrow track disappeared. "You can get there any way you like."

I took from my sack a handful of shiny stones gathered from a Mexican beach and threw them down.

"Can I use these as stepping stones?"

"Sure, of course," and we jumped from one to the other, first me, and Fellow Traveller following.

"Take a stepping stone to put in your crown," he said, as we reached the end.

"Now, where next?"

"If I scatter the marigold garland we could follow its scent,"

"Sure, try that," said Fellow Traveller.

It was tiring, running after the scent of the marigold as it blew in the wind, and at the end, I threw myself down on a rock and sighed.

"I don't know where to go next."

"Yes you do. Look in your bag."

"I've nothing there. Nothing useful at all."

"Of course you have. Just have a look."

"A sari from India, a sarong from Hawaii, a branch from the learning tree, -"

"OK, let's start with the first one. Find out where the sari wants us to go next."

I took the sari out of its bag. It was buttercup yellow with streaks of quiet lavender, and as it unfolded from the bag it began to blow like a sail towards the east.

"There we are then," said Fellow Traveller, "that's the direction we have to go in."

So we followed the sail of the sari, and then the kite of the sarong; and then the branch of the learning tree doused us around the tors and I hardly knew we had travelled so far before I realised the station had appeared at the end of the Thought Doctor's narrow track.

"Do you mean we are nearly there?"

"Sure. You need to get your laurel crown ready for submission to the Club."

"Oh no, one of those terrible metal ones that fall over your eyes and itch?"

Fellow Traveller laughed

"A made-to-measure one, made with all the mementoes of your journey. It will take two months to craft"

"Are you sure?" I said. "Will it be as good as the others?"

"Well, I think it might be better, because for one thing it will fit, for another it will be quite unique and for another it will have mementoes of your journey inside it."

"What do I do when I reach the last station?"

"When you arrive, and put on the crown, look in the mirror. There you will see what you have become and where the journey led."

In a quiet place at the station gates, I unfolded all the contents of my travels around me and spread them on the ground. How to fit them together? Surely they could never be crafted into one coherent and beautiful piece?

But as I stared at them hour after hour alone now outside the gates of my destination, it all became clear.

The learning branch became the strong anchor that held the crown together. With the golden learning thread I wove in the Mexican stepping stones, securely at the front. Then I rolled the lavender and buttercup sari and the sarong with the silver fish and turtles, into long narrow drapes and plaited them together with the learning thread to hold the branch in place. Between the binds and threads, I planted small clusters of heather from the journey. The crown was fragrant and colourful as a spring garden. Then I lifted it to my head, and tied the plaited fronds behind just tightly enough to be comfortable and secure.

"Will this do?" I asked.

"What does the mirror say?"

I looked in the mirror. I saw myself, like a spring goddess with all the colours of the hillside in her hair. I didn't look a bit like Thought Doctor or even like Fellow Traveller.

"I look like the goddess of my story!" I cried, surprised.

"Exactly that, "said Fellow Traveller. "The journey was yourself, so it follows that the journey leads to yourself. And your Crown celebrates yourself."

"Is that going to be alright, do you think?"

"That's the only way it *would* be alright. I think you are ready to submit your Crown to the Club," said Fellow Traveller.

And together we walked towards the gates of the station at the end of the mountain path, both of us with heads high, wearing our Laurel Crowns.

Our Tribute to Jack Whitehead by Tian Fengjun.

How did Educational Action Research Start in Guyuan and in China? How Living Educational Theory Action Research has Changed Our Educational Lives.

It's marvelous to be able to talk to anyone about the great changes in the educational life of most of my colleagues and myself here in Guyuan, a quite remote region in the northern part of China. For the last seven years or so, most of my colleagues in the English Department here have become intensively involved in their classroom-teaching research and have become more clear-minded in terms of how well they are managing a class, and how excited they are when they start to help solve those problems their students are having in their learning, and how hopeful they have become from reflections on their own teaching. And all this has as a reward their students improving their own learning…These are genuine experiences I have been told about by my colleagues.

On behalf of us all, I want to present my full-hearted thanks to Dr. Jack Whitehead. It is he and other experts like Professor Moira Laidlaw, and Professor Jean McNiff, who have made me change to being more open-minded, more democratic, more active in my support to my colleagues in their teaching research. In Autumn 2001, Dr. Moira Laidlaw came into my educational life, and a collaborative working atmosphere was created. It was in 2005 that Dr. Jack Whitehead made his first visit to here in China, and a "living educational action research" idea inspired me and then more of my colleagues and finally our work changed to become more "collaborative".

The first "Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Teaching" came into being in China. This has marked the real beginning of "Living Educational Theory Action Research" in China. Dr. Jack Whitehead and other experts have made a great contribution to the establishment of the Centre. Inclusionally, more and more colleagues have reached a stage of experiencing "practice before theory". We are

inspired to start our own research by way of the question, "How can I improve my practice … so that I can help my students improve their learning?" Up to now, nearly 60 AR reports have been completed and quite a lot of research papers have been published, 12 different-leveled research-projects have also been undertaken. The Centre is becoming known nationally and internationally. Every year when we see many of our younger graduates doing well in their class teaching, we appreciate their progress, and feel that much of this is due to "living educational action research".

"Influences of Educational Action Research in the Internationalisation of Educational Development. How can we create collaborative and inclusional living educational theories at China's Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Teaching?" presented by Dr. Jack Whitehead, on 17 NOVEMBER 2004 at the Second International Educational Action Research in Guyuan China, cleared up many of the confusions around the relationship between teaching and learning for many of my Chinese colleagues.

"Living Theory and Educational Action Research in Foreign Language Teacher Education and Development" presented by Dr. Jack Whitehead for the Second National Conference on Foreign Language Teacher Education and Development on 22-23 September 2007 in Beijing has been influential throughout China as a large number of foreign language teachers also saw ways of implementing educational processes at different levels. In 2005, 2006 and 2008, Dr. Jack Whitehead came to Guyuan, and during his visits he explained very clearly about "living educational theory" and encouraged us to continue our own "living educational theory action research" in a collaborative way. We have now successfully worked out a "Collaborative Living Educational Action Research" in the Centre. We know that this approach will continue to be very practical for teachers' education and development, yet at the same time be very helpful to students' learning.

At the time of Dr. Jack Whitehead's retirement form the University of Bath,

I am privileged on behalf of all my colleagues to show our sincere thanks to Dr. Jack Whitehead in these words. He is:

"an evergreen tree of living educational theory action research, a best friend to the people of Guyuan, and a life-long visiting professor at NingxiaTteachers' University".

Enjoying the experience and telling his ideas

And here it is in Chinese!

A happy moment between two colleagues

Foreign Languages Department,
Ningxia Teachers University,
Guyuan, 756000. Ningxia Province, P.R. China.

Dear Jack,

Together with Marie, we have enjoyed a number of conversations over supper --- lots of empowering talk and good eating! I have appreciated your acceptance of the TASC Framework and have been thrilled when you have used it as part of your vision for teaching and learning. I have also appreciated your warm listening and open smiling when we have agreed and celebrated our mutual belief that teachers really do matter and can make a wonderful difference to the lives of all learners in their care. I think that most important of all, I know that you have made a difference to many teachers' lives – empowering them and supporting them with your encouragement and open acceptance of their views. You are an educator who, through your own teaching, has demonstrated Living Learning and your profound belief in the good intentions of teachers with regard to their vocation. You have lived your beliefs, Jack! And I look forward to continuing our conversations! My very best wishes for the next phase of your living and learning!
Love,

Belle

Jack –

I have told you on many occasions how inspirational you have been to me and my research over the years I have known you – and it is a privilege to have the opportunity to express something of that in this tribute to you, which you so richly deserve.

It only needs me to remind you of how you came to be my supervisor for you to know how quickly you can make an impact on people. On the first CARPP 5 day at Bath, we were introduced to a rather novel way of choosing our supervision group. Each supervisor had to speak for a few minutes, stating what their interests were, what inspired them, etc. Then students' names were pulled out of a hat at random, with each student being able to choose who their supervisor was (and for those later down the line, which group members they preferred). My name was pulled out second, so I had to think quickly. My rational mind was debating whether to select Peter or Donna, as I had met both of them before, and there were different, very good reasons, why I should choose one or other. I had never met you before, so all I had to go on was that three minutes presentation – which surely wasn't enough to make such a key decision?!! But with the pros and cons of Peter v Donna racing through my mind, I found myself saying "Jack" – and then wondering what on earth I was doing!

I have of course since then realised exactly what had happened. Your energy, enthusiasm, passion for what you do, and your strong sense of values had communicated themselves powerfully, and deeply connected with me at an emotional level in that very short space of time.

Our extensive and lively discussions at times were challenging, always constructive, though sometimes required me to radically question my approach. I am sure we both remember an early meeting when I was so

pleased with an extended piece of writing I had produced, and was gutted to have it –validly- critiqued as stepping onto the soap box of 'Grand Narrative'. You stay so true to the principle of each person taking responsibility for their own learning, and accounting for their influence on others, whilst avoiding at all costs getting into a polarised debate which has the slightest flavour of 'I'm right, you're wrong' about it. If only this principle were integrated into all levels of our society, how much more humane a society we would have.

Unlike many academic supervisors I have known and heard of in the past, who desire to mould their students to their own form, you have a wonderful quality: the capacity to enter into the world of the student, and seek to understand what it is they want to learn, so that you can fully support them in achieving that. Your energy, enthusiasm and patience in enabling a student to fully realise their own ambitions in the creation of learning and knowledge are unlimited.

So in the company of many others, I want to thank you immensely for your 'life affirming energy' which has infused our stimulating and creative dialogues throughout the past years – and hopefully will continue to do so in the years ahead.

With love and best wishes,

Joan

For Jack Whitehead

I was first introduced to Jack in the late eighties at a course organised for practising teachers in the School of Education. This was a course similar to those that a number of us who taught in Wiltshire were attending at the time. Pat Darcy, then English advisor in the county, spent her training budget wisely by taking groups of primary and secondary teachers away for weekends at the Cherwell Institute in Oxford where we would occupy the time sharing and reflecting on our practice and looking at ways to improve it. I am sure that Pat had seen Jack's course as an extension of this model of professional development. On Jack's course I was introduced to action research methodology which would later come to influence my own professional development in a profound and more substantial way.

I became progressively more interested in this style of professional self development and for the first time recognised that time away from the chalkface involving genuine dialogue and self reflection could empower me to improve the quality of my practice. Not long after this initial course, I registered to undertake an action research investigation for an MPhil degree, into the improvement of my own practice. Although not my direct supervisor in the School of Education, Jack effectively mentored and supported me through it.

What did Jack do? He had that knack of critically questioning my values, assertions and evidence which always encouraged me to take a more humble perspective. He encouraged in me a sense of ultimate responsibility for my own work as a practitioner, a trait which has informed my approach to work ever since.

At the time there was a lot of debate and uncertainty about what could constitute 'educational knowledge'. Possibly this was a backlash after a decade of Conservative government education policy, but there was a feeling around that research and techniques could somehow be imparted from those who knew better because they based their evidence on the authority of objective research, or that research findings could influence teaching strategy. I believe that few of us in the teaching profession were ever comfortable with

this. Where we were lucky at that time in the Bath University region was in being able to work with someone like Jack who supported us in rigorous academic research which used the power of our own evidenced narratives and which placed us in control of enacting improvements and shaping our own development. The whole process was also highly value driven and here I believe Jack has had a huge influence: twenty years on, values-in-practice have completely taken root in teaching, and current government policy (fallen short in other respects) now recognises the importance of practitioner values that Jack was espousing with such foresight in the eighties.

He will smile, but I must also thank Jack for sticking with me for so long when I got behind on writing up and not least for the home visits he arranged which shamed me into submission!

Thanks Jack and good luck in the next stage of your work.

Chris Walton MPhil (Bath University 1991)
July 16 2009

Here at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

we were first introduced to Jack's writings by Jean McNiff, Action Research exponent and our Research Fellow, with whom we have developed a close working relationship. Before we had ever met Jack, we were amazed and in awe of his tenacity in getting his doctorate recognised as a valid piece of academic work – we think if he had given up, living theory would not enjoy the acceptance it does today all over the world. When you think of how far living theory has progressed in the last 20 years, that advance can mainly be attributed to the persistence and consistent pressure put on academia by Jack and Jean's writings and networking.

Living theory is helping to transform education and educational research in South Africa, giving power back to people who believed they were powerless to help themselves; changing the definition of what constitutes research and underlining the importance of "walking the talk" in a country where integrity is not one of the most lived out values! When we eventually met Jack, we were happy to see that he did indeed live out his values of love, since he and Joan made us feel so at home and welcome when we visited Bath. We shall never forget his sessions with his postgraduate students and sharing the experience of "embodied energy" on screen in his unique office at home. We have met him a few times since then, for workshops, conferences and on personal level and are always astounded by his energy and enthusiasm for what he is doing. He truly believes in and enjoys what he does.

Anyway, this is just a short note to thank you, Jack, for all you have done to help us develop our understanding around and development of living theory – you are a trailblazer, mentor and an example to us all and your writings on our bookshelf guide us on our way to creating our own living theory, without becoming living contradictions of our own values. We sincerely hope that you will now have even more time to devote to increasing your educational influence even further around the world and that you will have time to develop closer working relationships with us here in South Africa.

Warmest regards,

Lesley Wood, Tilla Olivier and Alette Delport,
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Living theory spans the world