

Jack Whitehead's responses to the 8th May 2020 session of the University of McGill School of Continuing Studies on 'Introduction to Action Research: Self-Directed Professional Development Pilot: Live Online Mini-Conference.

9th May 2020

Dear Louise, Cheryl, Michael, Bryan, Jill, Julia, Afrouz, Anne and Sarah,

My first response is to congratulate you all, together with Judy, Michael and Yuan-Jin Hong, for organising and participating in such an inspiring gathering of educators. If you download the recording of the session onto your hard drive and move the cursor backwards and forwards I think that you will appreciate the significance of this multi-media form of representation for communicating the importance of the relational dynamic of your communications and relationships in explanations of your educational influences in learning on this programme. If you have any questions you would like to ask me do please email at jack@livingtheory.org .

As you were presenting I noticed that you all used 'I' in questions about improving your practice such as, 'How can I increase integrative motivation?'; 'How can I increase student agency?'; 'How can I improve my practice?'; 'How do I promote my pedagogy of Joy?'. I also noticed that none of your details in the programme were given in the form of a question. Apart from the 'my' in Jill's and Cheryl's topics below all of your 'I's' were missing ! I'd encourage you to include your 'I' in your research question. I have made suggestions below on how you could include your 'I' in a question:

Introduction of Presenters Dr. Hoover & Dr. McBride

Sarah Wolfson – *The Feedback Dialogue: Fostering learner agency in the revision process.* *How am I fostering learner agency in the revision process?* <https://youtu.be/s-mQVaZFWRo>

Anne Roop – *The Integrative Motivation for Second Language Achievement: Perceptions of the target language community.* *How am I improving the integrative motivations of my second language students?* https://youtu.be/OkDw_VdYMkw

1. Ellen Phillips – TBA

Afrouz Mobayen – *Moving Toward Inclusion of Students with Non-Visible Disabilities.* *How am I enhancing the educational experiences of students through inclusion?* <https://youtu.be/FHh2PGn1ErM>

Julia Mercuri-Albisi – *Creating a Pedagogy of Joy.* *How am I promoting a pedagogy of joy in my teacher practice?* https://youtu.be/JwC_XRklqXY

Jill Landry – *Where's the Whiteboard? My Values and my Praxis in the Virtual Classroom.* *How am I living my values and my praxis in the virtual classroom?* https://youtu.be/r_eqxdX2jOs

Bryan Chan Yen Johnson – *The Effect of Task Type on Negotiation of Meaning and Consultation of an Online Dictionary (Linguee.com) in a Synchronous Online Language Class. How am I enhancing the negotiating of meaning between my students and their consultation of an Online Dictionary?* <https://youtu.be/cflvLbzsfIA>

Michael Dawson – *Thinking, Looking, and Talking Them Over: Working out a new way of figuring out phrasal verbs. How am I enhancing my students' understandings of phrasal verbs?* <https://youtu.be/iNu3A-8uEWQ>

Cheryl Conroy – *Understanding My English Second Language Pronunciation Students' Perspective on Accent and Cultural Identity. How is my understanding of my students' perspectives helping me to improve my educational influences in my students' learning?* <https://youtu.be/G-mRSCXnGs4>

Louise Ashcroft – *Reflective and Arts-Based Practices for Soulful Language Learning: Making connections in remote learning environments. How are my reflective and arts-based practices enhancing my educational influences in my students' learning in remote learning environment?* <https://youtu.be/ljHuX3U7ZsE>

2.

Your presentations all communicated a life-affirming energy with the values of human flourishing that I associate with explanations of educational influences in learning. I felt that you are all committed to enhancing the educational experiences of students. I know that the coronavirus pandemic has closed many schools. This makes it difficult to show and explain our educational influences in the learning of students. But you could bear in mind the idea that one of our professional responsibilities as educators is to make a contribution to our professional knowledgebase. I believe that we can all do this by generating and sharing our explanations of our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence our practice and understandings with values of human flourishing. I coined the idea of a living-educational-theory for these explanations. I experienced you all expressing such values within the dynamic of your relationships within the meeting and explicitly in your presentations.

I know that your program is non-accredited but I am hoping that you will consider bringing your explanations of your educational influences in learning for accreditation. You can access a justification for encouraging you to gain accreditation for making public your embodied knowledge as educators in:

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

You might also enjoy:

Whitehead, J. (2019) The action learning, action research experiences of professionals - *ALARj* 25(1): 11-27. A keynote presentation to the 10th World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association with the theme of "The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change: Individuals, Professionals, and Communities" Developments, Organizational Advancements, and Global Initiatives', 18 June

2018 in Norwich University, Vermont, USA. Retrieved 9 May 2020 from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jackkeynoteALARA.pdf>

You might also like to read Prof. Mishak Gumbo's editorial for the December 2019 issue of the Action Learning Action Research Journal at <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwearjeditorial1219.pdf> . Mishak Gumbo picks out the contribution that includes Judy and colleagues on Métissage and my own contribution as a focus of his editorial.

Afrouz – you focused on the inclusion of students and you might like to see how Joy Mounter has done this in her masters assignment on:

Understanding Learning and Learners assignment, *Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?* Retrieved 9 May 2020 from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>

It might be that McGill University could offer a masters programme to support you in your accredited work. The first Living Theory Masters Degree has recently been accredited at Newman University. It was designed by Joy Mounter who is a doctoral student of mine. You can access details of this Masters Degree at <https://www.learninginstitute.co.uk/mavalue> .

I may be in danger of overloading you with my responses ! I'll risk this in drawing your attention to the latest Living Theory Ph.D. to be awarded. You can access Arianna Briganti's 2020 doctorate on 'My living-theory of international development' at <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/ABrigantiphd.pdf>. Here is Arianna's Abstract and I am hoping that you identify with the first sentence on values:

My thesis is focused on the relationally dynamic values of empathy, social and gender justice, outrage, responsibility, love for and faith in humanity and dignity. The originality lies in their use as explanatory principles in my explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that affect my practice as a development professional. My other original contribution to knowledge is to relate the threefold nature of Living Theory methodology –a self-reflexive action-led research, a way of life, and a social movement -with my practice in International Development, which provides an example of how limitations in this sector might be overcome.

My self-reflexive research conceptualizes International Development as a global responsibility. It offers instances of how to work with others at micro (community) level, meso (organizational) level and shows my developing understanding of my potential systemic influence at a political (macro) level. By drawing insights mainly from self-study and narrative enquiry methodologies, my living-theory of International Development is presented as an alternative to the neoliberal approach and rests on the idea that Development means having a chance to contribute to a good change (Chambers, 1997, p.1743).

My stories derive from the experiences of my own life and that of the people I work with. I use the South African concept of Ubuntu and its transformative growth into I~we~us relationships. Whilst exploring commonalities between Living Theory and International Development, I show they can reinforce each other and combine in the

practical realization of a commitment to a fairer world. A generative form of development emerges that includes a gendered epistemology. I discuss how my own pursuit of gender justice has improved the quality of my work as a female development economist and practitioner, living in a capitalistic era.