

How can we create a global research community embracing a diversity of knowledge, philosophy and values?

Joy Mounter

1st August 2017

My educational research has focused on the creation and academic legitimization of my Living Theory as a Teacher Researcher and as a Headteacher Researcher. I ask, research and answer questions that explore my practice, whilst creating my living-educational theory to explain my educational influence in the understanding and clarification of my ontological living-values and development as a practitioner, in the learning of others and in the social formations through my varied connections.

My practice and generated understandings are embedded in my ontological living values, two of which are to contribute positive energy and influence to the social formations I am part of and to add to the public educational knowledge base. This is reflected through my question for my doctoral research proposal and tied integrally to the focus of this writing.

‘How can I contribute to the creation and enhancement of the educational influences of a community of learners, supporting each other and their own development?’

My continual reflections and research has meant my path often, as now, diverges to create new understandings or formulate further questions. As my understanding grows, connections are made and new knowledge is created, and I link back, generating a new depth of understanding and purpose.

Community:

LTAR is embedded in the dynamic meshing of values to practice and lived through the practitioner. I am drawn to the writing of Michael Onyebuchi Eze (2010, pp. 190-191), exploring our humanity and the dynamic relationships of growth between us. This concept of Ubuntu, from Africa, which carries hope for the flourishing of humanity within communities, resonates so much as I read, research and work within a Living Theory methodology.

Whitehead (2015), explores this concept of Ubuntu and the relational I ~ We ~ I (Whitehead, 2015), ‘I am because we are’ and ‘We are because I am’. Whitehead and Huxtable (2015, p. 1) discuss how the I for self, is “distinct, unique and relational”, which exists in an ‘inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship’. Huxtable (2012), takes this further highlighting the “trustworthy, respectful, co-creative spaces” where the worlds of researchers practice, questions and values touch. This space is then represented as the ~ between I ~ We ~ I. In my research (Mounter, 2012) I research this space in-depth, suggesting the term ‘Nurturing Responsiveness’, as the dynamic relationship required to co-create a space of flourishing, reflective community learning.

Drawing from this philosophy, I love this quote from Desmond Tutu (2013) to summarise my understanding of community:

“I need you, in order for me to be me; I need you to be you to the fullest.”

Exploring this idea of I ~ We ~ I, I is unique and distinct as Whitehead and Huxtable explore, but the importance of what I add to the community to enable me to be me to the fullest is central. I, as part

of the we, offer and receive, the we a collective of I. This concept of we, still has the underlying concept of being made up of I, the egocentric self with focus on personal growth and transformation.

To move the philosophy to a community perspective of growth and transformation and enable I, to be I to the fullest, moves meaning to 'us'. I~We~Us. This understanding of us, resonates so fully with my value of 'Nurturing Responsiveness', Mounter (2012).

Living Theory Action Research (LTAR) methodology engenders a reflective understanding of self, of others and the ability to be part of a community flow of energy for change from within and with-out. Whitehead states (2015) that this can add to the flourishing of humanity, a concept explored continually since Aristotle and Plato. Keyes (2002) defines flourish as 'living within an optimal range of human functions, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth and resilience'. Defining growth on both a personal level combined with a community level would support my understanding of flourishing of humanity Whitehead (2015) refers to, in creating our own living-educational theory.

For me the concept of adding to the flourishing of humanity (Whitehead, 2015) seems such a momentous idea, something I struggle with. To me it is engendering human flourishing through community reciprocity. I would describe my personal belief of Human Flourishing as 'Human Growth and Human Transformation', which I would further designate as 'Personal and Collective Growth and 'Personal and Collective Transformation'. Personal and Collective, representing the I~We~Us, one inaccessible without the reflective energy of the other.

I find this sense of 'Personal Growth and Transformation' and 'Collective Growth and Transformation' through the discussions I have with Marie Huxtable and Jack Whitehead online, as part of my PHD. Saying it is a discussion is limiting in the connotations it brings to my mind. It is so much more:

Living Community – I~We~Us

- Nurturing Responsiveness (Mounter, 2012)
 - Loving Recognition (Huxtable, 2012)
 - Passionate Energy
 - Articulating as a means to 'Understand and Organise Personal thought'
 - Reflective Reciprocity
 - Intrapersonal Energy Vortex
 - Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Sharing
 - Living Question (social validation and challenge)
 - Living Values
 - Living Wisdom
 - Living Renewal
- } Living Phronesis

Nurturing Responsiveness is defined from the values I hold as a person and as a practitioner. It is about the positive energy and nurturing of a co-creative community space in any moment of time or place. I~We~Us. The energy flow created by two or more people where the above attributes can flourish to support the personal~ collective growth or flourishing of humanity~ transformation.

Within Judaism a cosmological myth or sacred story Tikkum Olam, focuses on the tenant of 'repairing the world', social and environmental action healing the ills of the world.

My understandings of Nurturing Responsiveness and the space we hold within us (Mounter 2012) energises and nurtures reflective practice and Living Wisdom and calls for us to 'Make A Difference in the world' through offering as a gift; being me to the fullest to enable others to be themselves to the fullest, as a collective 'us'.

The rich and diverse knowledge, cultural and philosophical bases of both eastern and western perspectives strengthen when embraced, the educational knowledge base ability of a research community to fulfil 'me to the fullest'.

Below the sacred story within Judaism, links so much with understanding the flourishing of humanity (Whitehead, 2015) drawn from my research and the African belief of Ubuntu.

At the beginning of creation God said, "Let there be light!" (Gen. 1:3). The light filled the darkness and ten holy vessels, which were sent out to fill the darkness. The vessels being fragile broke; the light of the universe was shattered into countless shards, lodged into each facet of creation, scattered far and wide.

The highest human calling is to search for these shards of primordial light, to identify them, to absorb and in doing so, to help 'repair the world'. Every one of us, has within us the ability to make a difference. I~We~Us.

To Jack and Marie,
Thought for the day! Joy x