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Educational Research for Social Change with Living Educational Theories

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Abstract

This position paper explains how African educational researchers could contribute to a new epistemology for educational knowledge. It is focused on those researchers who are willing to research and explain their educational influences in enquiries of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" in the social contexts in which they live and work. Such explanations are called living educational theories to distinguish the explanations from those *derived* from the conceptual abstractions of traditional theories. The African concept of *ubuntu* is used with the digital technologies of multimedia narratives to explain how educational researchers for social change can create their own living educational theories that carry hope for the future of humanity. The global significance of the ideas in this editorial commentary is contextualised with research from China, India, Europe, Canada, Japan, USA, Tasmania and South Africa.

Keywords: Living Educational Theories; Action Research; Ubuntu; Self-Study; Living Theory.

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Background

The National Research Foundation of South Africa has funded a three-year (2011–14) Transformative Education/al Studies Project with the generic question, "How do I transform my professional practice as ...?"

In this project, educators/postgraduate students in Higher Education will reflect critically on their learning, teaching, assessment, curriculum and/or educational professional practice in a variety of ways with the multiple benefits of improving the quality of their practice, earning the award of a senior degree and earning research outputs in the form of publications. This will simultaneously impact positively on the quality and rate of under and post graduate throughput and research outputs (TES, 2010).

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Participants and lead investigators in this project have submitted a successful proposal to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) for presentation at the 2012 AERA Conference. The symposium title is *Starting With Ourselves: Perspectives from the Transformative Education/al Studies Project* and the abstract states:

Higher Education in South Africa is characterised by a range of challenges. The Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project brings into dialogue a number of practitioner-research studies that respond to these challenges. The overarching research question – ‘How do I transform my education/al practice as?’ – is adapted for each participant’s educational context, giving rise to a range of responses and insights. This symposium will provide an opportunity to engage with a variety of participant perspectives from the TES project. The objectives of the session are to make public education/al knowledge engendered by the TES project and to illustrate how participation in the *process* of this self-study of practice research project actually changes its practitioners and their education/al practice and contexts.

The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (HELTASA) ran a special interest group (SIG) for action research and self-study from 30 November to 2 December 2011 and this is how it has been described in correspondence to the Action Research Africa Network:

This SIG focuses on all aspects of Action Research and Self-Study as a practitioner-research approach which addresses social and educational issues. This group already networks via three jisc mails, namely Action Research Africa Network [aran@jiscmail.ac.uk], Practitioner-Researcher [practitioner-researcher@jiscmail.ac.uk], and Transformative Educational Studies Masters and Doctoral Studies [transformativeeducation-alstudy@jiscmail.ac.uk]. The annual SIG meeting at HELTASA meeting will be used for face-to-face interaction to enhance the relationships and practice forged digitally throughout the year, and to plan for the year following. The above commitments of South African educational researchers to contribute to social change and transformation in relation to the public good is clearly related to the transformations in South African society with the new constitution coming into law in 1996. This commitment is consistent with both the mission of AERA and the objectives of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in that both focus on improving practice and serving the public good.

AERA seeks to:

advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. (Ball & Tyson, 2011).

BERA seeks to:

encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit (BERA, 2010).

Ball & Tyson (2011) make the point that educational researchers have fulfilled the first part of the AERA mission to advance knowledge about education and to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education. They say that educational researchers have been less vigilant and less effective, however, in fulfilling the

second part of the mission: to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.

In this paper I am suggesting that the research by contributors to the Transformative Education/al Studies Project, because they are formed as “I” problems, together with the use of multimedia narrative and the most advanced social theories of the day to share meanings of the relational dynamics of ubuntu, will do much to fulfil both parts of the AERA mission: advancing knowledge about education to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education and promoting research to improve education and serve the public good. To make my case I (Whitehead, 2012) include references to the work of Eden Charles (2007), Ian Phillips (2011), Linda Vargas (2010) and Anat Geller (2010). My purpose in including these references is not to signal their agreement with the ideas in this paper. Rather, it is to emphasise the importance of their own creativity and originality in generating their own living educational theories for social change.

The Genesis of Creating Living Educational Theories with Living-theory Methodologies and Action Research

The genesis of living educational theories with living-theory methodologies emerged from my research programme into the nature of educational theory at the University of Bath between 1973 and 2009. In 1973 I moved to the University of Bath from my position as Head of the Science Department at Erkenwald Comprehensive School in the East End of London to see if I could contribute to the development of valid forms of educational theory. The transformation in my vocation from being a science teacher to being an educational researcher was prompted by a mistake in the then-dominant disciplines approach to educational theory. The mistake in this approach was the belief that the explanatory principles an individual used to elucidate their educational influences in their own and pupils’ learning were at best pragmatic maxims that had a crude and superficial justification in practice that would be replaced in any rationally developed theory by principles with more theoretical justification (Hirst 1983, p.18).

In the first lesson I taught as a new teacher in 1967 I found myself saying to myself, “I’ve got to do this better” and “How can I improve what I am doing?” On moving to the University of Bath in 1973 I decided to explore the implications of asking, researching and answering my question, “How do I improve what I am doing?” for the construction of valid explanations of my educational influence in my own learning and in the learning of others. I later added my educational influence of the social formations in which I live and work to the explanation. The transformation in my educational epistemology from that of a positivist and empirical scientist, influenced by my first degree in physical sciences, followed from the nature of the question. The “I” in the question existed as a living contradiction in the sense of holding together the values I wished to live as fully as possible, together with their negation.

I first saw myself as a living contradiction during the 1971–2 academic year when the Inspectorate in Barking provided me with a video camera to explore its potential as an educational aid in the Science Department. On turning the camera on myself in one of my science lessons I could see that I was not doing what I believed that I was doing. I believed that I had established enquiry learning in my classroom in the sense that I was responding to questions asked by the pupils. The video showed me that I was actually organising learning resources with predefined questions that I was encouraging my pupils to ask. From this experience of existing as a living contradiction I found myself imagining what I could do to establish enquiry learning, I acted on my plan, evaluated my actions in terms of my pupils’ learning and modified my actions in the light of my evaluations. At the time I did not explicate what I later came to understand as the action reflection cycles of an action researcher. The explication came later (Whitehead, 1976) in a project with six teachers on improving learning for 11–14-year-olds in mixed-ability groups, and in my first presentation to a BERA Conference (Whitehead, 1977).

My idea of creating living educational theories, as the explanations that individuals create for their educational influences in their own learning and in the learning of others, came from a question asked by the Soviet logician Eward Ilyenkov (1977) when he asked, "If an object exists as a living contradiction what must the thought be (statement) that expresses it?"

I liked the idea of creating a living educational theory from an exploration of the implications of asking, researching and answering the question, "How do I improve what I am doing?" in which the "I" existed as a living contradiction.

From my studies of logic I understood the 2,500-year-old arguments between dialectical and propositional thinkers in which proponents of the different epistemologies often denied the rationality of the other's position. The arguments focused on the academic legitimacy of including a contradiction in correct thought. Aristotle developed a law of contradiction which stated that two mutually exclusive statements cannot be true simultaneously. Plato, in his dialogues on poetic inspiration, and through the words of Socrates, explained that a dialectician could hold both the One and the Many together. Popper (1963, p. 315) claimed that the reasoning of dialecticians, with the nucleus of contradiction, was based on nothing better than a loose and woolly way of speaking that was entirely useless in theory. Marcuse (1964, p. 111) claimed that propositional logic conceals the dialectical nature of reality with its nucleus of contradiction. Rayner (2011) has offered an inclusional logic that can embrace and draw insights from the meanings of dialectical and propositional thinkers without denying the rationality of dialectical and propositional thought but by acknowledging some limitations in their ways of making sense of the world (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

To avoid the limitations of communicating meanings using words alone, from within either propositional or dialectical ways of thinking, while benefitting from some insights of both ways of thinking, I shall focus on visual narratives of educational practices that include both visual data and interpretations using words.

Educational Research for Social Change with Living Educational Theories using Visual Narratives

In creating a living educational theory individuals must be prepared to be accountable to themselves and others in terms of the values and understandings that give meaning and purpose to their lives. In this sense, the values are ontological in that they are intimately related to who one believes oneself to be. Clarifying and evolving the meanings of these values involves their embodied expression in enquiries of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" It involves their clarification and evolution in the course of their emergence in practice in action reflection cycles. What I mean by this is that the values are offered as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning as one expresses concerns, creates action plans, acts and gathers data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the actions, and evaluates and modifies the concerns plans and actions in the light of the evaluations.

I like Noffke's (1997) criticism of living educational theories because it serves as a reminder to engage one's values of humanity with the social formations in which we live and work. Noffke believes that the processes of self-awareness in the creation of living educational theories are vital in identifying the contradictions between one's espoused theories and one's practices. Noffke is critical of the focus on individual learning as she says that this only begins to address the social basis of personal belief systems. She accepts that such efforts can further a kind of collective agency but claims, mistakenly in my view, that it is a sense of agency built on ideas of society as a collection of autonomous individuals. As such, Noffke says, it seems incapable of addressing social issues in terms of the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society. Noffke claims that the process of personal transformation through the examination of practice and self-reflection may be a necessary part of social change, especially in education; it is however, not sufficient (p. 329).

In creating a living educational theory in enquiries of the kind, “How do I improve what I am doing?” it is wise to bear in mind the importance of engaging with the social formations that influence one’s practice and the importance of the idea of methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 2001) in recognising the creativity of the practitioner-researcher in engaging with social formations. What Dadds and Hart mean by methodological inventiveness is that practitioner-researchers create their own unique way through their self-chosen research focus (p. 166). They say that:

more important than adhering to any specific methodological approach, be it that of traditional social science or traditional action research, may be the willingness and courage of practitioners – and those who support them – to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care (p. 169).

What this means for the creation of a living educational theory is that the individual researcher does not simply apply anyone else’s methodological approach to their enquiry. They create their own unique living-theory methodology in the course of the enquiry and in generating their explanation of their educational influence.

To show you what I mean by both methodological inventiveness and the importance of visual narratives for communicating the meanings of the embodied values that are expressed in practice and form explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence, I shall first focus on a three-and-a-half-minute video clip in which I am talking about *ubuntu* at a workshop at the University of the Free State in South Africa on February 28, 2006.

Video Clip 1: Jack Whitehead talking about Ubuntu at a workshop at the University of the Free State in South Africa <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkKyeT0osz8>



As can be seen in the video I am focusing on a chapter by Peter Beets and Trevor van Louw (2005) entitled “Education Transformation Assessment and Ubuntu in South Africa”. I am pointing out some of the limitations of using only words on pages of text to communicate the meanings of the expression of embodied values. If you download the clip and move the cursor backwards and forwards I believe that you will experience an empathetic resonance with my expression of a life-affirming energy as I communicate my understandings of *ubuntu*. I am thinking of *ubuntu* as a relational way of being in which one’s own identity is recognised as being intimately related to others’. Huxtable (2009) has gone into more detail into the use of video in this way to clarify the meanings of the expression of embodied values. The value of adding visual data to communications of meanings using text alone can also be appreciated through the videos and texts of three keynotes I have presented in Norway, Nigeria and the USA (Whitehead 2011a, 2011b, 2008) in which I draw attention to the importance of including visual data with text in

communicating the meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. The latest notes of the keynote from Norway, with the video of the presentation, can be accessed at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jw16-11-11bergen2011.pdf>.

Living Educational Theories from Others' Research

I now want to focus on the living educational theories of other individuals who have expressed their methodological inventiveness in generating their own explanations of their educational influence. I want to stress that while each individual has acknowledged the usefulness of insights drawn from my own research, their creative and critical responses to their own practice and the ideas of others have resulted in original contributions to knowledge. In drawing on the work of these individuals I am not suggesting that they agree with the ideas in this particular paper. Rather, I am focusing on their work as they acknowledge using some of my ideas in making their own original contributions to educational knowledge.

My choice of the doctoral, living educational theories of Charles (2007) and Phillips (2011) below is because they focus on establishing *ubuntu* as a living standard of judgment in the Academy. My choice of Vargas's (2010) Masters dissertation on the flamenco dance as educational is because of the context of the research in South African primary schools and its response to issues raised in a multicultural learning environment. It also serves to emphasise the importance of the creative arts in engaging with such issues. My choice of Geller's (2011) Ed.D. dissertation, "Becoming a Better Dialogical Educator" is because of the global significance of learning how to sustain dialogues in contexts of conflict, through sustaining a commitment to values that carry hope for the future of humanity through living boundaries.

My reason for including extracts from the abstracts from the MA and Ed.D dissertations and PhD theses is that much time, effort and reflection has gone into the abstracts so that they are as clear as possible about the contribution to knowledge being made by each individual's living educational theory.

How Can I Bring *Ubuntu* as a Living Standard of Judgement into the Academy? Moving Beyond Decolonisation through Societal Reidentification and Guiltless Recognition

Abstract of PhD Submission to the University of Bath, 2007 by Eden Charles, graduated 28 June 2007:

This is a living-theory thesis which traces my engagement in seeking answers to my question that focuses on how I can improve my practice as someone seeking to make a transformational contribution to the position of people of African origin. In the course of my enquiry I have recognised and embraced *Ubuntu*, as part of an African cosmology, both as my living practice and as a living standard of judgement for this thesis. It is through my *Ubuntu* way of being, enquiring and knowing that my original contribution to knowledge has emerged ... Visual narratives are used to represent and help to communicate the inclusional meanings of these living standards of judgement. The narratives are focused on my work as a management consultant and include my work with Black managers. They explain my educational influence in creating and sustaining the Sankofa Learning Centre for Black young people in London. They include my living as a Black father seeking to remain present and of value to my son within a dominant discourse/context in which this is a contradiction to the prevalent stereotype (Charles, 2007).

My Emergent African Great Story: “Living I” as Naturally Including Neighbourhood, Embodying An Audacious Valuing Social Living Pedagogy and Imagining The Universe Luminously, as an Energetic Inclusion of Darkness Throughout Light And Light In Darkness

In answering Schön’s call for a new epistemology for new scholarship, my contribution is an emergent African Voice reaching out to the academic and non-academic, African and non-African alike, for the fullest co-creative possibilities. It informs on my valuing social living pedagogy, comprising ‘a unique purposeful recognition, an enhanced relational mutuality and an engaging dialogical praxis’. These dynamic relational standards of judgement are at the heart of my ‘Emergent African Great Story’, created and presented, as if using a dynamic loom (consisting of my theoretical lenses) to create a traditional African Cloth.

Included are Whitehead's living educational theory, Cooperider's Appreciative Inquiry and Marshall's Living Life as Inquiry, together with my own storytelling that affirm the African Voice in my professional practice. However, also revealed is ‘stuckness’ in my receptivity, responsiveness and reflexivity (Phillips, 2011).

“Out The Box: Flamenco Dance As Educational.” A Living-theory Study Of Dance In Primary Education

The diversity of cultures found in many urban schools that I visited, presents a tremendous challenge for educators wishing to include dance into their learning programmes. As a result dance is either not being offered at these schools or is approached in a tokenistic way. In many instances the teachers I spoke to were inadequately trained or ignorant of the requirements for dance in the formal curriculum. This study seeks to offer a way to address these issues.

In my research, I have reflected on some of the educational and social factors that I believe are challenging dance education in these schools. I have conducted a Qualitative Action Research with an Auto Ethnographic, Self-Study approach using the Living-theory Methodology as a point of departure (Vargas 2010).

Within Dialogue And Without: How Has “Being In The Unknown” Become a Value in my Developing as a Better Dialogical Educator?

This is an autobiographical study using a Living-theory Action Research methodology supported strongly by storytelling and visual data as a means of analysing, illustrating and generating a living educational theory concerning the attributes ‘good enough’ (Winnicott, 1965:140-152) dialogical educators might strive for in light of the Buberian ‘I–Thou’ dialogical encounters (Buber, 1955).

This thesis is concerned with ‘I’ as an early childhood pedagogy instructor, an Israeli Jew from a Hebrew-speaking culture, working mainly in three educational frameworks in three cultures: firstly, an Israeli-Arab college which is predominately Muslim; secondly, as director of a course for Druze care-givers on the occupied Golan Heights; and, thirdly, as pedagogy instructor in an academic Teachers’ Training College that is affiliated with the Zionist Kibbutz movement, servicing the multicultural and multinational sectors of the Israeli society (Geller, 2011).

Contextualising the global significance of the ideas in the paper with research from China, India, Europe, Canada, Japan, USA, Tasmania and South Africa and co-operative values

In advocating the generation of living educational theories by South African educational researchers who are committed to researching their own influences in social change, I want to explain how such explanations could be contributing to a global movement of social transformation. I am thinking of a transformation that is being guided by a commitment to live as fully as possible values and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity. The success of the transformation is dependent upon individuals researching their own practice and offering public explanations for their educational influences as they explore the implications of working to live their values as fully as they can. It is dependent on our learning to share our enquiries within international cooperation.

International years are declared by the United Nations to draw attention to and encourage action on major issues. The International Year of Cooperatives 2012 is intended to raise public awareness of the invaluable contributions of cooperative enterprises to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

Maureen Breeze (2011) is the joint president of the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education. In her guest editorial for the special issue of the *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, "Transforming education through co-operation – A force for change", she makes the point that values are culturally referenced. She explains that the values framework that has grounded her life is that articulated by the International Co-operative Alliance in its 1995 Statement on the Co-operative Identity. These values are focused on the six organisational values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity and the four ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Interpreting these from an educational perspective provides Breeze with a language to explore her motives and actions and scaffold her reflection.

I recognise these values of co-operative activities and relationships in the narratives from the following international contexts. I am suggesting that we learn how to hold ourselves and each other accountable for living these values as fully as we can in our educational research for social change with living educational theories. Walton (2011a, 2011b) has explored the implications of living such values in creating living educational theories in both collaborative and contexts of higher education. I do urge you to read "A Living-theory Approach to Higher Education" (Walton, 2011c).

China

From China there are the living theories generated by contributors to China's Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Teaching. The centre was opened in December 2003, and is hosted at Ningxia Teachers' University. The present curriculum in China advocates task-based approaches to teaching and learning, a radical transformation from the traditional modes of didactic teaching. It requires greater flexibility and creativity from teachers and students. Researchers in the Centre are evolving a form of action research they call "Collaborative Living Educational Theory Action Research with Chinese Characteristics".

At <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/moira.shtml> you will find two teaching methodology handbooks, copyright belonging to the Centre, but which you are welcome to use if you want. There is also a short guide to action research by Dean Tian Fengjun, Director of the Centre, and Moira Laidlaw, a life Professor at Ningxia Teachers' University with a Friend of China award. At <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/moira/mllect1.htm> you can access "Developing Educational

Methodologies through a Living-theory Approach to Action Research”, Laidlaw's inaugural lecture presented at the Longdong Institute, Gansu Province, China in 2004.

India

From India there is the living-theory of Swaroop Rawal's (2006) PhD thesis, “The role of drama in enhancing life skills in children with specific learning difficulties in a Mumbai school: My reflective account”. Rawal's thesis is a reflective account of an action research project set in a drama classroom. It is a multi-voiced patchwork text which is created and built imaginatively to re-present her students and her experience in the drama classroom. The thesis explores the implications of asking, researching and answering the questions “How can drama be used to enhance life skills in children with specific learning disabilities studying in a school in Mumbai?” and “How can I improve my practice?” This research is concerned with a teacher's capacity to recognise and realise the opportunity of an alternate reality in teaching.

Rawal is explicit about the values she holds herself accountable for living as fully as she can in enhancing the reality of loving and caring for the students. This includes the reality of an empathetic, compassionate, just and democratic classroom. As a drama teacher Rawal sees drama as tool for education. She sees drama as a natural vehicle for explorative and experiential learning. Rawal investigates the influences of action research on her practice and the impact of engaging in the stages of action research which provided her with a methodical structure for implementing and analysing the teaching and the learning process. The thesis shows the importance of creativity, emotional understanding and development, improved self-esteem and a notion of the joy of autonomy to enable the students to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Rawal (2009) shows how she has developed her living educational theory as she worked empathetically and caringly for the benefit of her students. As a playwright using dramatic scripts, Rawal explains how reflective learning can bring to light a creative and effective child-friendly method to track emergent changes in life skills learning in children. Using drama, Rawal demonstrates how a method of analysis of children's drawings can help with an understanding of the complex process of understanding life skills enhancement and the evaluation of learning. The development of this method of analysis is grounded in a dialogical enquiry based on a real-life experience.

Also researching in an Indian context, Fr. Barnabe D'Souza has produced his doctoral thesis, “Changing Mindsets? Evolution of a Rehabilitation Programme for Chemically Dependent Male Street Adolescents in a Major Indian City” (2008). D'Souza has worked in Mumbai supporting street boys since 1982, full-time since 1986. His thesis began with the question, “How can we improve the educational experiences of the most vulnerable children in India?” Drawing on his thesis, D'Souza's (2011) book, *From Ecstasy to Agony and Back: Journeying with Adolescents on the Street*, presents the journey of adolescent street drug-addicts from psychological brokenness resulting from family disruption to the process of mending; from abuse, trauma and vulnerability to building up of self-esteem, talents and personality; and finally to the process of moving off the streets. He demonstrates, using a participatory action research approach, how children can be their own psychologists, creating meanings for themselves out of their own experiences and understanding. He claims that by taking ownership of their actions, street children begin to structure their moving off the streets, facilitating their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, thereby improving their status.

Europe

From Europe there are the living theories from Croatian educational researchers being supported by Branko Bogнар, the Head of Pedagogy at the Josip Strossmayer University in Osijek. He has co-written *Pupils as Action Researchers: Improving Something Important in our Lives* (Bognar & Zovko, 2008). They

point out that although an increasing number of teachers carry out action research inquiries in their educational practice, the role of pupils and students is not still sufficiently explored. Holding firm to the value that pupils should be equal participants, Bogнар and Zovko explore the possibility of pupils becoming fully fledged action researchers. With the help of video-data from classrooms, and with evidence from the pupils' voices, they explain how 10-year-old pupils take over the processes of action research themselves. This has also been shown to be possible with six-year-olds in Mounter's (2007) action research. Bogнар and Zovko's research took place in a child-oriented school whose main purpose was the development of the creative potentials of all participants. In their inquiry the pupils determined their own challenges with the aim of improving something important in their own lives. Bogнар and Zovko show that action research is meaningful when students engage with it on their own terms, on the basis of their own needs, interests and self-chosen values.

Also from Europe we have the living theories being developed and supported by Margaret Farren and Yvonne Crotty of Dublin City University. Farren's doctoral thesis, *"How can I Create a Pedagogy of the Unique Through a Web of Betweenness?"* (2005), examines the growth of her educational knowledge and the development of her practice as higher education educator, over six years of self-study. The thesis explains the evolution of her educational influence in her own learning, the learning of others and in the education of social formations. Farren and I agree that by the education of social formations we include the meanings of living values that carry hope for the future of humanity more fully, in the rules and processes that govern its social organisation

In her paper, *"Through the Enlightened Eye and I – Am I Bringing Creativity and Visual Literacy into Higher Level Education?"*, Crotty (2011) discusses what she means by visual narratives. She shows how her learning in school and higher education has shaped her teaching and explains the importance of emotions in teaching and learning and how these have influenced her emerging pedagogy.

Crotty describes the Masters programme at Dublin City University and how she supports students on the MSc in Education and Training Management programme. The 2011 special issue of the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* comprises four papers by students supported by Crotty. The papers show the values, ethos and spirit of the course she runs and the influence of her own research in introducing creativity and visual literacy into higher education studies for practicing educators. I do urge you to access the special issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (Crotty, 2011) as it shows the originality and significance of the research being support by Crotty and Farren at Dublin City University's Centre for Workplace Learning and e-Innovation with great potential for the development of cooperative enquiries to develop our mutual research interests.

The third contribution from Europe includes my own research and reviews, from a living-theory perspective, of two publications from the Council of Europe with its 47 member states. The Council is supporting the Pestalozzi Programme for enhancing education.

I set out some implications of educational research for social change with living-educational-theories in a recent keynote in Norway, *"Theories Produced by Practitioner Researchers: Contribution to Improvement both Locally and Globally"* (Whitehead, 2011). In the keynote I focused on:

- The development of good and researchable problems.
- A discussion of the current base of theory, and the implications of the choice of theory in relation to choice of method and analysis.
- A discussion of the methodological approach.

As my contribution to the conversation on developing an agenda for Norwegian research on teacher education (Whitehead, 2011a), I focused on the improvements both locally and globally of the theories produced by practitioner-researchers in relation to the three points above. I am thinking of practitioner--researchers who want both to improve practice and contribute to knowledge through enquiries of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" such as those by Flornes (2007) and Gjøtterud (2009, 2011).

My two reviews of Council of Europe publication from a living educational theory perspective are of Huber and Mompoin-Gaillard's (2011) *Teacher education for change: The theory behind the Council of Europe Pestalozzi Programme* and the Council of Europe's "Constructing an Inclusive Institutional Culture" (Council of Europe, 2011).

Reviewing the Huber and Mompoin-Gaillard text from a living-theory perspective (Whitehead, 2011c), I advocate the development of a collaborative enquiry to generate living-theories that will be directly engaged with living the values of the Pestalozzi Programme as fully as possible. Without such a programme there is a danger that attempts to articulate theory behind a programme will remain rhetorical and fail to engage with the theory-creating capacities of practitioner-researchers throughout Europe.

Meanwhile, reviewing "Constructing an Inclusive Institutional Culture" (Council of Europe, 2011) from a living-theory perspective I acknowledge the importance of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjorn Jagland's point about rights and responsibilities: "The guide is an important part of the Council of Europe's action aimed at facilitating cohesion in our societies, based on the rights but also the responsibilities of every individual and every institution of our societies" (p. 4).

I also agree with Head of the Research and Development Division Gilda Farrell's point that "The task of constructing an inclusive institutional culture and intercultural competencies in social services currently raises a highly topical question: what will be the future of social cohesion in a Europe which is becoming increasingly pluralist under the influence of migration?" (p.5)

In my response I argued that in answering this question a different approach is needed to that set out in the methodological guide. The different approach is focused on the knowledge-creating capacities of practitioner-researchers in generating their living educational theories of social change. I hope that I have stressed this point sufficiently in this paper: it is the exercise of our personal responsibility for the public good in enquiries of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" that will help to contribute to advancing knowledge about education and encouraging scholarly enquiry related to education to improve practice and serve the public good.

Canada

From Canada there are the living theories from educational researchers supported by Jacqueline Delong. Delong's doctoral research, "How Can I Improve my Practice as a Superintendent of Schools and Create my own Living Educational Theory?" (2002) focused on researching the development of a culture for improving learning by supporting the knowledge-creating capacity in each individual in the system.

Delong has created the website, "Welcome to Action Research Canada" (<http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/>), on which she says:

In a culture of inquiry, values are expressed in different contexts with an energetic and dynamic response to creating individual and system spaces for learning and growth. The transformatory nature of my learning as a superintendent of education is described and explained in my PhD (DeLong & Whitehead, 2012) ... The focus of my learning over the years 2007–2009 demonstrated the growth in my educational knowledge with respect to my understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, historical and current contexts, alternative ways of representing knowledge and how I might bring Indigenous ways of knowing into the Academy.

In “Journey to the Otherway: How Can I Improve My Practice By Living My Values of Love and Joy More Fully?” (2011), also hosted on this website, Elizabeth Campbell writes:

This paper captures my journey to create a living educational theory. In an effort to answer the question: ‘How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully?’ in an authentic and meaningful way, I make use of methodological inventiveness and alternative representation. Throughout the project, I share narratives, reflections, paintings, video clips, songs and voices of ‘the Other’ to articulate, explicate and validate my values and living educational theory.

This is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the educational influence of the cooperation between DeLong and me (De Long & Whitehead, 2012). Our influence is acknowledged by Campbell in her original contribution to educational knowledge with a value of “loving kindness” in her living educational theory.

Japan

From Japan there are the living theories of nurses and nurse educators being supported by Je Kan Adler-Collins of Fukuoka University. In his doctoral research, “Developing an Inclusional Pedagogy of the Unique: How do I Clarify, Live and Explain my Educational Influences in my Learning as I Pedagogise my Healing Nurse Curriculum in a Japanese University?” Adler-Collins (2007) explains that:

Two major strands of enquiry are interwoven and inseparable in this thesis. The first is my life-long self-study of my own learning and the values and practices that embrace all the different facets of my life, including being a nurse, educator, and Buddhist priest. The second extends the first, putting them firmly in the context of a specific time frame, weaving a textual narrative that passes between the different aspects of my multiple selves, building a picture for my readers that is grounded in my actual praxis.

In a collaboration with Chinese researchers, Adler-Collins (2011) outlines his analysis of how the sudden embrace of western medical and nursing concepts and values could be detrimental to China’s health and result in a non-productive clash of philosophies thus creating unnecessary tensions within the workforce . He addresses the question of the suitability of western forms of knowing dominating China’s traditional systems of education in health care through the author’s reflections of teaching in Japan and China as a nurse educator. This warning could be of use to educational researchers in Africa who may be stifling the emergence of indigenous ways of knowing through the inappropriate application of a western epistemology (Bruce-Ferguson, 2008).

USA

From the USA there are the living theories being developed and supported by Jill Farrell. In “Cultivating Collaborative Self-study Living-theory: Laying a Foundation for Teacher Learning”, Farrell and Rosenkrantz

(2008) focus on their collaborative practices as a teacher educator and a classroom teacher: “In our efforts to bring teachers together for reflective dialogue and inquiry focused on the implementation of an arts-based critical thinking methodology, along with the nurturing of several action research learning communities, we continued to examine the emergence of our own living-theory” (p.120).

In “Confessions of Two Technophobes: A Self-study of Two Teacher Educators’ Efforts to Understand and Develop a Participatory Culture within a Technological Environment”, Brown and Farrell (2010) focus on the creation of a participatory learning culture:

Our aims were to co-create a participatory learning culture for our students crossing the boundaries of time, space and borders and document our journey. Our collective knowledge as experienced teacher educators is significant, yet our knowing is worthless if we cannot share and prepare a new generation of teachers. As self-study researchers we are committed to continual exploration of questions related to ‘How do I/we improve our practice?’ (p. 37)

Tasmania

From Tasmania there are the living theories of environmental activism being supported by Phillip Tattersall (2010). The author, writing as a sixth-generation Tasmanian, tells the story of his journey to a new form of environmental activism. The influences of social context, family history and personal learning on his development as an activist are described and discussed. It is argued that Tasmania is still in the grip of an oppressive postcolonial colonialism that continues to shape the roles and expectations of ordinary Tasmanians. Living theory is playing a role in the development of the *next steps* as the author further refines his ideas and practice as he works through a series of living contradictions in his inner and outer lives. In this sense he is in an important phase of personal reinvention and spiritual rejuvenation.

South Africa

From South Africa there is the living-theory of B.P. Singh (2010) in his book, *When the Chalk is Down*. I believe that *When The Chalk Is Down* will captivate your imagination and resonate with the life-affirming energy and values that you associate with a sustainable future for humanity. The story communicates clearly the relational dynamic of the life of an activist in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa as he worked tirelessly for 25 years to right a wrong over the withholding of the deeds of his parent’s house. The sustained commitment in resisting the imposition of inappropriate power relations filled me with admiration. This commitment continued through a career-long engagement in junior and senior positions in schools, unions and the regional offices. A most moving story with great educational significance for those who are seeking to humanise society through education and to facilitate the flourishing of humanity. It is also written with a great love of life.

Also from South Africa there is also excellent research emerging from the Action Research Unit of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University with Lesley Wood (2010) as she explores the transformative potential of living-theory educational research:

Transformation, based on the values of social justice, inclusion and respect for human dignity, is espoused by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University as a core value. However, there is a danger that transformation and its accompanying values will remain empty rhetoric unless they are incorporated into everyday practice at micro-levels. I am therefore prompted to ask 'How can we use educational theory to transform our practices at higher education?' In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate how values-based, self-study action research can help provide answers to questions about educational theory: I will demonstrate how I, together with colleagues, hold ourselves accountable for our own practices via the generation of living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989) and by so doing, make significant contributions to the growth of educational knowledge. I make a case that self-study practitioner inquiry has a vital role to play in the development of new theories of practice which will contribute to the transformation of the epistemology of educational inquiry in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (p. 105).

Concluding Reflections

A chance meeting at the Ubuntu Centre in Cape Town with Joan Conolly of the Durban University of Technology led to invitations for several visits to the Durban University of Technology and my developing interest in educational research for social change with living educational theories. I have also been privileged to visit the Action Research Unit at Nelson Mandela University, the University of Cape Town, the University of Johannesburg for the 2009 HELTASA conference, Stellenbosch University, the University of the Free State, the Central University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Each visit has served to reinforce my belief in the importance of researching the educational influence of an *ubuntu* way of being in living the values that carry hope for the future of humanity. I am hopeful that this paper will serve to encourage you, as an individual practitioner-researcher to offer your own explanation of your educational influence as a contribution to educational knowledge. I am thinking of your educational influence as you explore the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?"

In generating your own living educational theory I am suggesting that the inclusion of an *ubuntu* way of being, with the cooperative and relationally dynamic values that distinguish *ubuntu*, will help South African educational researchers to strengthen the global significance of their research as it not only contributes to the advance of knowledge of education and encourages scholarly enquiry related to education, but also improves practice and contributes to the public good (Whitehead, 2012a, 2012b).

I do hope that you will contribute to the development of a living values, improving practice cooperative enquiry, by joining the practitioner-researcher e-forum at <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=practitioner-researcher&A=1> and the international continuing professional practice project at <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/> and that our conversations continue.

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¹ The video of the 2012 TES presentation at the American Educational Research Association with discussant's responses can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera12/jwdiscussantTESatAERA12.pdf>

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