12-2-2010

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Abstract

What I want to share in this contribution to education inquiry are some insights from my educational research programme between 1973-2010 about the kind of educational theories that can explain the educational influence of an individual in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. These insights are focused on:

- The desire of educators to account to themselves and others for living as fully as possible the ontological values they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives in their vocation of education;
- The capabilities of individuals to generate valid explanations of their educational influences in learning as their living educational theories;
- The significance of multimedia narratives for communicating the meanings of the energy-flowing values that individuals use to explain why they are doing what they are doing;
- The need to extend epistemological understandings from propositional and dialectical explanations into the relationally dynamic awareness of inclusionality.

Introduction

In my first lesson teaching science at Langdon Park Comprehensive School in September 1967 in the East End of London, UK, I felt a tension because I had a strong feeling that I could do better in helping my pupils to learn. I could hear myself saying, 'I've got to do this better,' 'How do I do this better?' 'How do I improve what I am doing?' In my study of the philosophy of education for the Academic Diploma between 1968 and 1970, I accepted the belief of the philosophers of education that educational theory was constituted by the philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history of education. My interest in studying educational theory was to improve my practice with insights from the most up-to-date social and educational theories of the day. It

took me almost four years to recognise that something was wrong with the *disciplines approach* to educational theory. The *disciplines approach* distinguished educational theory as constituted by the philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history of education. No matter which theory I used from a discipline of education, either individually or in any combination, I could not deduce from the theories a valid explanation of my educational influences in my own learning or in the learning of my pupils. Paul Hirst (1983), one of the early proponents of the *disciplines approach* to educational theory, acknowledged what was wrong with the approach in the mistake of believing that the practical principles I brought into my studies of educational theory were "...at best pragmatic maxims having a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be replaced by principles with more theoretical justification" (p.18).

My strong belief that the dominant view of educational theory on teacher education programmes was mistaken (Hirst, 1983, p. 18) motivated me to move, in 1973, from my post as head of a school science department, into the University of Bath as a lecturer in education, where I could focus my educational research on contributing to a valid form of educational theory. My contract with the University of Bath between 1973 and 2009 enabled me to develop as an educator in tutoring and supervising master's and doctoral degrees and to develop an educational research programme into the nature of educational theories that carry hope for the future of humanity. At the end of my contract with the University of Bath at the age of 65, I was fortunate to be offered a post as adjunct professor at Liverpool Hope University where I continue with my teaching and research into the issues discussed in this article.

The Desire of Educators to Account to Themselves and Others for Living as Fully as Possible the Ontological Values They Use to Give Meaning and Purpose to Their Lives in Their Vocation of Education

In 1994 I helped to organise The Third World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association at the University of Bath. The organising committee thought long and hard about the most appropriate theme of the Congress before adopting Erica Holley's suggestion of 'Accounting for Ourselves.' This seemed most appropriate for a World Congress on Action Research because at the heart of action research is the commitment of the action researcher to study their own influence as they seek to improve their practice, their understandings of this process, and the social context in which the practice is located.

In my educational research I make the assumption that educators express a commitment to education as a means of humanizing themselves and society and of facilitating the flourishing of humanity. This is consistent with the strategic map (strategic plan) for 2010-11 of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University (2010a). I am also assuming that at the heart of each individual's vocation of education are expressions of values that

> Values such as freedom, justice, love, care, and compassion are, for me, ontological values. These values flow with life-affirming and life-enhancing energy.

carry hope for the future of humanity. These assumptions are of course open to question.

To distinguish something as educational involves a value judgement. Education is a values-laden activity which involves educators in seeking to respond to their students in ways that can help to improve their learning. The values I am thinking of are ontological values in the sense that they are the values that the individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their lives. Values such as freedom, justice, love, care, and compassion are, for me, ontological values. These values flow with life-affirming and life-enhancing energy. I believe that as educators and educational researchers we express this energy in what we are doing in education. I am stressing the importance of expressions of energy because, like Vasilyuk (1991), I believe that whilst energy is expressed in everything that we do, this energy is not clearly represented in explanations of educational practice. I am particularly interested in flows of life-affirming or life-enhancing energy, because I use such expressions of energy in my recognition of what counts as 'educational.'

I also believe that the values-laden explanatory principles we use to explain why we are doing what we are doing flow with this energy, and that we have the capability and desire to know that what we do is beneficial for our students. This is why my research programme over the last 43 years has focused on producing and sharing explanations of educational influences in learning. The explanations are shared through http://www.actionresearch.net. The explanations in the living theory section (http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml) in the doctoral theses are from a minimum of five years of sustained educational enquiry and provide evidence of the capabilities of individuals to generate valid explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is taking place.

The Capabilities of Individuals to Generate Valid Explanations of Their Educational Influences in Learning as Their Living Educational Theories

I make a distinction between learning and educational learning. Not all learning is educational. There are many examples in history of people learning to do things that are not educational. I was born in 1944 when the guards in the concentration camps were killing millions of innocent human beings. People had learnt to do these things. Such learning is not educational as it violates values of humanity. For me, educational learning includes the humanizing of society and facilitating the flourishing of humanity (Liverpool Hope University, 2010b). It also includes engaging with the most advanced social theories of the day to understand the constraints and possibilities in the influences on one's own practice.

For example, I like the idea of capabilities because of Sen's (1999) economic theory of human capability. Sen stresses the importance of freedom in his economic theory as he explains how it goes further than an economic theory of human capital because of the importance he gives to human values. In the face of economic rationalism and globalisation I use the insights from McTaggart (1992) in staying alert to resisting the dangers of devaluation and demoralization in

seeking to improve my educational practice in the generation of my own living educational theory with a focus on values:

> We have moved beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were economic ones (devaluation) to a situation where moral questions are denied completely (demoralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability (as if greed had nothing to do with it). (p. 50)

I coined the term 'living educational theories' (Whitehead, 1985, 1989) to distinguish two different kinds of explanations. In the first kind, explanations of individual educational practices are 'derived' from the abstract conceptualisations of traditional, propositional theories of the disciplines of education. In the second kind, the explanations are produced by individual practitioner-researchers to explain their educational influences in learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

I believe that you and I, as individual educators and educational researchers, have the capabilities for generating valid explanations of our educational influences in learning as our living educational theories in such 'I' enquiries. I was taught, in my first degree in physical sciences, to remove the 'I' from scientific accounts to enhance objectivity by reducing subjectivity and bias. It took me three years to recognise that philosophers of education, whilst appearing to ask individuals to take seriously the implications of asking, 'What ought I to do?' treated the 'I' in the question as existing within the conceptual abstraction of 'person.' The 'I' remained formal whilst pretending that it contained content in itself (Schroyer, 1973, p. vvii). There was no interest in exploring the implications for a living person, a living 'I.' The exploration remained conceptual and abstract with no engagement with the 'I' of a real person.

There are some 28 doctoral and other 'I' enquiries in the living theory section of http://www.actionresearch.net, providing evidence for my claim that individuals have the capabilities for generating valid explanations of their educational influences in learning. The expression of these capabilities has been extended by changes in University regulations that now permit the submission of e-media for accreditation in research degrees. The University of Bath changed its regulations to permit such submissions in 2004, and the majority of theses accredited after 2004 at http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml include multimedia narratives.

My commitment to using visual data in my educational research started in 1971-72 when the Inspectorate in my Local Education Authority provided me with a video camera and recorder to explore its educational potential in the school science department I was leading. Viewing a videotape of one of my lessons was my first experience of seeing myself and experiencing my 'I,' as a living contradiction. By this I mean that I believed that I had established enquiry learning in my classroom where I was making a serious response to my students' questions. The videotape showed clearly that I was giving the students the questions rather than allowing them to emerge from the student experience and interest. This recognition of 'I' as a living contradiction, whilst embarrassing to watch, immediately transformed into a hopeful response as my imagination started to create possibilities which would enable me to move to living my values more fully in practice. I advocate the use of video in observing our own practice to see if the experience of being a 'living contradiction' stimulates the imagination to create possibilities for improving practice.

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The visual records of one's own practice can also communicate expressions of the flows of energy with values that constitute influences in learning. Hence I stress the importance of multimedia narratives in these explanations.

The Significance of Multimedia Narratives for Communicating the Meanings of the Energy-Flowing Values That Individuals Use to Explain Why They Are Doing What They Are Doing

For the whole of my working life at the University of Bath between 1973 and 2009, the judgments on my academic 'output' included my publications in refereed academic journals. Because the funding of the Department of Education in the University was influenced by these kinds of publications, I published in the refereed academic journals and continue to do so. In doing this I am aware of myself as a living contradiction because the language and logic in the papers published in most academic journals exclude the language and logic of the explanations of my educational influences in learning. Let me explain why, in terms of the expressions of energy-flowing values in our educational relationships and in terms of our experiences of ourselves as living contradictions when we feel that we are not living our values as fully as we could.

Vasilyuk (1991) pointed out that "…it is obvious that we know how 'energetically' a person can act when positively motivated and that we know that the meaningfulness of a project lends additional strength to the people engaged in it" (p. 64). However, says Vasilyuk, we have very little idea of how to research relationships between energy and value.

My most recent research (Whitehead, 2010) into the methods for investigating these relationships involves the use of empathetic resonance (Sardello, 2008; Whitehead, 2009) and empathetic validity (Dadds, 2008). I was introduced to 'empathetic resonance' by Sardello, (2008, p. 51) who uses it to mean the resonance of the individual soul coming into resonance with the Soul of the World (p. 13). I am using *empathetic resonance* to communicate an energy-flowing feeling of the immediate presence of the other in communicating the living values that the other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life.

I shall also use the idea of empathetic validity (Dadds, 2008) to develop a shared understanding of inclusional meanings of expressions of life-affirming energy with values. For Dadds, empathetic validity is the potential of practitioner research in its processes and outcomes to transform the emotional dispositions of people towards each other, such that greater empathy and regard are created. Dadds distinguishes between internal empathetic validity as that which changes the practitioner researcher and research beneficiaries, and external empathetic validity as that which influences audiences with whom the practitioner research is shared.

The process of empathetic resonance involves the expression of meanings in a process of constructing shared meanings of energy-flowing embodied values. This is a very different process of philosophical reflection and meaning making to that in my initial introduction to conceptual analysis where understanding a concept involved grasping a principle and the ability to use words 'correctly.'

Empathetic resonance has been demonstrated with visual narratives (Huxtable, 2009) where a cursor is moved backward and forward along a video clip, enabling pauses where the viewer feels that the practitioner is expressing an energy-flowing ontological value. The validity of the researcher's [Marian Naidoo in the example below] response is evaluated in relation to the practitioner's [the caregiver in the example below] response. One of the most powerful demonstrations of empathetic resonance and validity has been presented by Marian Naidoo (2005) in her communication of the meanings of a "passion for compassion" as the expression of an embodied ontological value and as a living epistemological standard of judgment with a video clip that can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJIuUVE0qA

Figure 1. The beginning of the clip. Retrieved from
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJIuUVE0qA

Figure 2. 54 seconds into the clip. Retrieved from
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJIuUVE0qA

The clip is 1:03 minutes. If you listen to the clip of George talking about his life as a caregiver for his wife of 55 years who has Alzheimer's, and then move the cursor backwards and forward to take in all of the clip, gradually move the cursor to around 54 seconds. I believe that you will feel Marian Naidoo's meaning of a "passion for compassion" as the wife communicates her response to what her husband is saying to Marian Naidoo. My own feeling is that the wife's expressions also carry her own love and humour. The visual data is vital for communicating this meaning and can be felt, recognized, and understood through an embodied empathetic response to both husband and wife, their context, and story and its embodied expressions of meaning.

I would contrast this ostensive approach to expressing and sharing embodied meanings with the approach I used in my introduction to British Analytic Philosophy in the Academic Diploma course at the London Institute of Education. In this course the meanings of concepts involved grasping a principle and the ability to use words 'correctly' through lexical definitions of meaning where the meanings of words were defined with the help of other words.

It bears repeating that Dadds (2008) distinguishes between internal empathetic validity (that which changes the practitioner researcher and research participants) and external empathetic validity (that which influences audiences with whom the practitioner research is shared):

> I take 'empathy' to refer to the human capacity to identify oneself with the feelings, experiences and perspectives of other people such that one tries genuinely to see and feel

> the world through their eyes, hearts and minds. In this sense, empathy enables people to be 'connected knowers' who 'learn through empathy.' (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 115, as cited in Dadds, 2008, p. 280)

It is external empathetic validity that is necessary for the formation, communication, and sharing of the meanings of embodied energy-flowing values as explanatory principles and living epistemological standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of living educational theories. The use of the methods of empathetic resonance and empathetic validity has focused on the issue of the communication of meanings. The issues of clarifying meanings using action reflection cycles that strengthen the validity and rigour of explanations of educational influences have been dealt with elsewhere (see Whitehead, 2010 at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera/jwmhBERA10310810opt.pdf).

As well as difficulties in communicating the meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values on pages of printed text, there is also a problem of communicating the meanings of experiencing oneself as a 'living contradiction' in propositional statements on pages of printed text. Such statements usually follow a logic that requires contradictions to be removed from explanations. In developing a living logic of explanations that can draw insights from both propositional and dialectical theories, I advocate exploring the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' I am thinking of explorations that include the use of multimedia narratives in explaining educational influences in learning. For example, Christine Jones, the senior inclusion officer for Bath and North East Somerset, graduated with her master's degree from Bath Spa University in 2009. Hers was the first multimedia living theory dissertation to be legitimated by this University and it received a merit. It includes video clips showing Jones' enquiry, 'How do I improve my practice as an inclusion officer working in a children's service?' and her analysis clarifies the meanings of the expression of her embodied values in the course of their emergence through practice. You can access the dissertation from http://www.actionresearch.net/living/cjmaok/cjma.htm

As with many innovative approaches to educational research and theorising, researchers rightly wish to understand the methodological principles that are being used in the research. In the creation of a living theory, each individual generates their own living theory methodology. This is grounded in what Dadds and Hart refer to as 'methodological inventiveness' (Dadds & Hart, 2001):

> So what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should be, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques… (p. 169)

You can access further details of living theory methodology in the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* at http://ejolts.net/node/80 (Whitehead, 2008).

The explanations of educational influence in learning, represented in such multimedia narratives, use a different logic and language to those in the majority of refereed journal of education. The explanations represented within multimedia narratives extend epistemological understandings from those structured through propositional and dialectical logics into those influenced by the living logics of inclusionality (Rayner, 2005, 2010; Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

The Need to Extend Epistemological Understandings: Moving With Propositional and Dialectical Logics Into the Relationally Dynamic Explanations and Logics of an Educational Influence of Inclusionality

What counts as knowledge in particular social contexts has a profound influence on how individuals make sense of their world and what for them constitutes a contribution to making the world a better place to be.

I have explained above how the commitment to propositional knowledge, by adherents to the *disciplines approach* to educational theory, supported the colonising assumption that the practical principles used by educators to explain their educational influences in learning would be replaced in any rationally developed theory by principles with more theoretical justification. In making this point about colonisation I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not denying the value of insights from propositional theories in the creation of living educational theories. I am making the point that the *disciplines approach* to educational theory was mistaken in seeking to 'replace' (Hirst, 1983, p. 18) the practical principles used by educators to explain their educational influence by principles from the disciplines of education.

> I am not denying the value of insights from propositional theories in the creation of living educational theories.

As an example of my use of insights from the theories of others, I draw on the work of Jurgen Habermas. In his work on *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1976), Habermas describes the four validity claims that he believes we make of each other in seeking a shared understanding. I use his ideas of comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and authenticity in strengthening the validity of explanations of educational influences in learning with such questions as:

- How could the comprehensibility of the explanations be strengthened?
- How could the evidence base of the assertions be improved?
- How could the awareness of the normative influences on the explanations be enhanced?
- How could the authenticity of the writings be strengthened?

Whilst valuing such insights from dialectical theories and propositional theories, I am aware of their colonizing limitations in providing the epistemologies of living educational theories in explanations for educational influences in learning. In developing an appropriate epistemology

for the explanations of these influences, I have emphasised above the importance exploring the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

Overcoming these limitations in propositional and dialectical logics in explanations of educational influences in learning has involved the development of a living logic of inclusionality (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009). Inclusionality is distinguished by a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as continuous, connective, reflexive, and co-creative (Rayner, 2006, 2010).

In developing this logic from explanations of educational influence in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' individuals can now use multimedia narratives to communicate the expression of the meanings of embodied values in explanations of educational influence. I have presented such a narrative in the section on research methods in a presentation on 'Creating an educational epistemology in the multimedia narratives of living educational theories and living theory methodologies' (Whitehead, 2010, pp. 8-10) to the 2010 British Educational Research Association Conference.

On viewing the video clip of the Alzheimer's patient and her caregiver (Naidoo, 2005), I believe that you will experience the empathetic resonance that is needed to comprehend the meaning of a passion for compassion as an expression of an ontological, energy-flowing value. I am taking an ontological value to be one that a person uses to give meaning and purpose to their lives. I do recommend Naidoo's doctoral thesis to you because it is an original contribution to the transformation of what counts as educational knowledge. This contribution is focused on the inclusional meanings of an ontological value of a passion for compassion.

I am claiming that it is the energized flow of such values that distinguishes the living logics of explanations of educational influences in learning. The experience of the negation of such values is the experience of being a living contradiction, and dialectical insights can help in the evolution of transformative practices such as those of Charles (2007), in moving from decolonisation into societal re-identification. The most advanced propositional theories of the day such as Sen's (1999) economic theory of human capability and Yunus' understandings of social business (Yunus & Weber, 2010) can help with understanding the constraints and opportunities that are open to modification or transformation at a particular conjunction of economic, cultural, historical, and social influences (Van Tuyl, 2009).

For example, I am writing this in Durban, South Africa, where I am leading a number of workshops on action research and living theory at the Durban University of Technology. On the 30th October 2010, I was privileged to be a guest of honour at the book launch of B. P. Singh's *When the Chalk is Down* (2010). This is a living educational theory of B. P. Singh's 25-year struggle to obtain justice in relation to the deeds to his parent's house. Land issues are a

significant social and political issue in South Africa because of the unjust evictions from the land during the last century and its appropriation by the colonisers.

B. P. Singh is an educator. His living theory traces his learning journey through teaching in schools, to his work in education at local, provincial, and national levels. As I said at the book launch, I believe that *When the Chalk is Down* has implications for the kind of societal re-identification, described by Charles (2007), as requiring the influence of a living standard of "Ubuntu" to become a distinguishing feature of South African society. Ubuntu is an African way of being that recognizes the vital significance of a relational awareness of community in the individual's life and identity. In other words, the generation of living theories from the action research of South Africans, as they work and research with questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' can have societal implications as well as being significant for the lives of individuals. B. P. Singh acknowledges his own individual Indian heritage. He is also a South African whose values of humanity transcend any particular cultural heritage in a particular state. At the same time, the values of humanity expressed in the living theory of *When the Chalk is Down* are contributing to the values that could distinguish the societal re-identification that is evolving from the 1994 Government and the legislative ending of Apartheid.

Such living theories with their living logics provide an answer to the constructive criticism of living theories that they are personal and do not engage with social issues such as poverty and social injustice (Noffke, 1997, p. 329).

Interim Conclusion

As an Educator and Educational Researcher, How do I Improve What I am Doing and Contribute to Educational Theories That Carry Hope for the Future of Humanity?

I have been fortunate to receive many invitations over the past few years to present the above ideas to seminars, workshops, and conferences around the world. I place accounts of these presentations in the "What's New" section of http://www.actionresearch.net so that they are public and open to responses that can help me to strengthen my educational influences and contributions to educational knowledge.

> There is still much to do in exploring how multimedia narratives can be used to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values in explanations of educational influence.

In the evolution of my work as an educator I am seeking to enhance my systemic contributions to improving practice with action research, hence my participation in collaborative activities in Mozambique, South Africa, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Canada, Croatia, Japan, China, and the U.K. with educators who wish to explore the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions about improving their practice and making contributions to knowledge.

In terms of improving what I am doing as an educational researcher, I am continuing to deepen and extend my research programme into educational theories. This continues with a focus on the logics, explanatory principles, and standards of judgment in explanations of educational

influences in learning. There is still much to do in exploring how multimedia narratives can be used to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values in explanations of educational influence. I am thinking of explanations of educational influence that can include insights from propositional and dialectical theories whilst transcending their limitations. I am claiming that these limitations can be transcended in the creation of living educational theories that are both part of improving practice and of making contributions to the transformation of educational practice and knowledge through educational enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

Such transformations cannot be accomplished by an individual. They require the commitment of many individuals. The transformations require communications for the sharing of ideas and for mobilising actions. The Internet is providing a space for such communications, as is this Journal. You can access the practitioner-researcher e-forum and the Action Research Africa Network from the "What's New" section of http://www.actionresearch.net, to make your own contributions by sharing your desires, values, and action research into enhancing learning opportunities wherever you are working and researching to make the world a better place to be. I hope that this paper stimulates your desire to contribute to enhancing the influence of such communities.

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