

A creative, relationally dynamic framing for four presentations at the 2011 American Educational Research Association.

Continuing my educational enquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' with the generation of living educational theory.

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Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University

Introduction

My purpose in producing this relationally dynamic framework is to clarify for myself, and to make public in sharing with you, a creative phase in my educational research programme. It is creative in the sense of speculating about future possibilities for my continuing research into improving practice and generating knowledge. These possibilities are prefigured in what I am doing in the present and influenced by my evaluations of my learning from the past. The possibilities are closely related to the values I use to account to myself and others for my practice and the knowledge I am creating as a contribution to making the world a better place to be. Through my use of visual data I hope to show you the meanings of the embodied values I express in what I am doing in different cultural contexts. These are the values I use to account for what I am doing in the belief that they carry hope for the future of humanity, especially in relation to living loving and productive lives.

Most years since 1991 I have submitted proposals to both the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) as well as contributing keynotes, workshops and presentations to other events. BERA requires proposals to be submitted some 9 months before their presentation, whilst AERA requires the proposals to be submitted some 8 months before the presentation of successful proposals. These time differences between writing and presenting a successful proposal enable me to speculate in the proposals about the future of my research and contributions to educational knowledge. The deadlines for the presentations, in September and April in each year, act as motivators to make public my understandings at these times. The presentations then form data that contribute to my reflections on how I might evolve further my educational practice, understandings and contributions to educational knowledge. So the four presentations, each formed with the disciplined application of my critical evaluations, are data I use in the following creative, relationally dynamic framing for my speculations about the future of my research programme.

A creative, relationally dynamic framing.

As I look ahead, my intentions for my research programme, are focused on what Tattersall (2007) refers to as Community Based Auditing. This involves grounding one's environmental activism and action research within a community focused enquiry. I have made a start, following Walton's (2011a, 2011b) lead in a collaborative enquiry within the Research Centre for the Child and Family at Liverpool Hope University:

“How can we, individually and collectively, integrate research and practice across disciplines and between professions to enable a demonstrable improvement in the wellbeing of children and young people?”

I intend to extend this collaborative enquiry by contributing to a community focused project, ‘Keynsham Kind’ on enhancing well-being in community that is focused in Keynsham, UK, with Marian and Shaun Naidoo and William House, together with the Education and Inclusion Team, led by Nigel Harrison of the Children’s Service of Bath and North East Somerset:

Keynsham Kind – a project to enhance well-being through the process of well becoming.

Marian Naidoo, Shaun Naidoo and William House, Centre for the Child and Family, Liverpool Hope University

Keynsham Kind is a project focused on enhancing well-being in the community of Keynsham in Bath and North East Somerset in the UK. It is both a complex and ambitious project and places living theory action research at its heart. As we engage with others in Keynsham the need grows stronger to join with the people in building a better community, sharing actions and plans for improving well-being, acting with others and gathering our data to make a judgment on our effectiveness in enhancing well-being through well-becoming and evaluating our effectiveness in living our values as fully as we can.

The intention of Keynsham Kind is to engage in a process of enquiry that involves members of the community of Keynsham in engaging in their own process of enquiry. Through our practice we will help contribute to an improvement in the way members of the community can begin to help itself through its practice. From this we hope that a more vibrant, self directed and sustainable community generated social capital can be achieved.

As we engage with others in this project we are holding ourselves to account for living as fully as we can the values we associate with well-being. The project rightly starts by asking the following of all involved: - Who am I? What do I do? How can I improve what I do?

With this community focus in my developing research programme I shall work, to include the community project of Andrew Henon, a socially engaged artist, with his understandings of Creativity Works (Henon, 2010 – see <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/henon/creativityworkslowah.pdf>) and the research of Maureen Breeze on Cooperative Learning. Maureen is the joint president of the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Learning (see http://www.iasce.net/Newsletters/2010_July/July2010.pdf).

An initial presentation on this community focus in my research programme will be at the Conference organized by Prof. Jean McNiff on ‘Value and Virtue in Practice-based Research’ at York St John University on the 1st and 2nd June 2011

(see <http://w3.yorks.ac.uk/education--theology/faculty-of-education-theo/value-and-virtue.aspx>). Here is my proposal for the conference:

How do I improve what I am doing in seeking to live and evolve my values as fully as I can and contribute to educational knowledge?

Jack Whitehead, Centre for the Child and Family, Liverpool Hope University

My research is influenced by the guiding vision and orientation of the Centre for the Child and Family in Liverpool Hope University. These are to generate knowledge which directly improves the world and engage in research to create ways of living and working that have a humanising influence on children, families and wider society. It is also influenced by the wider mission of the Faculty of Education in its aspirations to develop knowledge and understanding that will contribute to the education and wellbeing of all as a globally significant endeavour whilst characterizing all work with values arising from love and hope.

The presentation will show how I am responding to the research question: How do we integrate research and practice, across disciplines and between professions, to enable a demonstrable improvement in the wellbeing of children and young people? It will show how I am contributing to the creation of a distinctive approach to scholarship through the integration of research, teaching, and the application of knowledge in practice. This includes the development of a living theory approach to action research and the integration and evolution of this approach in professional and community settings, to discover better ways of improving 'the wellbeing of children, families, communities and wider society' (Walton, 2010).

The research will draw on data from the livinglearning website at <http://www.livinglearning.org.uk/>, from the Aiming High for Children project at Liverpool Hope University, from the community based project coordinated by William House and facilitated by Marian and Shaun Naidoo in Keynsham and from the global networks of practitioner-researchers contributing to <http://www.actionresearch.net> and to <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/>

Walton, J. (2010) The Centre for the Child and Family: Strategic Map 2011 – 2012. Retrieved 4 March 2011 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/walton/CfCFStrategicMap2011.pdf>

As my research programme develops with this community focus, evaluations of my effectiveness will include evidence of my influence in extending the child and family communications on enhancing well-being on the website <http://www.LivingLearning.org.uk> .

The originality of this creative framing with the four AERA 2011 presentations below, lies in the use of multi-media technology with visual narratives and empathetic resonance to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of relationally dynamic and energy-flowing values. These values form explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. They are used as

living standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of claims to educational knowledge

I think that it is worth emphasizing that these standards of judgment include relationally dynamic and energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

The explanations also include the influences of complex ecologies from different sociocultural contexts and draw insights from the most advanced social theories of the day. I illustrate below some of these different sociocultural contexts with the expression of meanings of my embodied values with video-clips of presentations. The inclusion of complex ecologies within explanations of educational influence was addressed in my AERA 2010 presentation on *Improving Practice And Knowledge Through Time And Space With Complex Ecologies And Action Research*. Highlighting the importance of complex ecologies was prompted by the Theme of the 2010 AERA Conference on *Understanding Complex Ecologies In A Changing World*.

The four presentations below, that have stimulated the production of this creative, relationally dynamic framing, are from the programme at AERA 2011 on the 9th and 11th April 2011:

Saturday 9th April.

1) 10.35-12.05 Discussant in session Action Research Identity Outcomes: Shift in Self-Perception, Professional Role and Researcher Identity. Interactive Symposium.

Presenter on Paper: **Meta-analysis of the Outcomes of Action Research** – click <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jwaera11riel.pdf>

My presentation is organized into three sections:

- 1) Why do action research.
- 2) Practical principles and valid explanations.
- 3) Ontology, energy-flowing values, identity and natural inclusionality.

2) 2.15 – 3.45 Session - Action Research: Path to Learning in Doctoral Programs and Beyond.

Presenter with Jacqueline Delong on Paper: **Transforming Educational Knowledge Through Making Explicit the Embodied Knowledge of Educators for the Public Good** - click

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jdjwaera11.pdf>

In this presentation we focus on enhancing students' critical evaluations in a democratic process of evaluation and on using empathetic resonance with visual data for clarifying embodied expressions of meanings of energy-flowing values such as loving kindness.

Monday 11th April.

3) 8.15-10.15 Session - Teacher Educators as Researchers: What to do when Roles Do Not Fit

Presenter on Paper: **Teacher Educators as Researchers: Living Educational Theory** - <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jwaera11mieke.pdf>

In this paper I focus on the inappropriateness of imposing external principles on a self-study researcher who is generating their living educational theory. I stress the importance of recognising methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2001, p.166) in the creation of one's own living educational theory. I also stress the importance of focusing on research into improving practice which recognizes the nature of constraints of inappropriate theoretical constructions in the generation of a living educational theory.

4) 4.05-5.35 Session - Data, Accountability and Collaboration: Action Research Meets Basic Educational Needs.

Presenter with Joan Walton and Bart McGettrick on Paper: **Accounting for Educational influences in Improving Practice for the Public Good** - click <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jwbmjwaera11.pdf>

In my contribution I reflect on the ontological, epistemological and methodological significance of explaining educational influences in improving practice for the Public Good in living educational theories in the Centre for the Child and Family of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University. My reflections follow the headings of the successful proposal on: *Purposes; Theoretical Frameworks; Research Methods; Data Sources and Evidence; Institutional Impact; Substantiated Conclusions.*

The idea of providing a relationally dynamic framing for my AERA 2011 presentations emerged from my presentation to BERA 2010 (Whitehead, 2010a) on:

Creating An Educational Epistemology In The Multi-Media Narratives Of Living Educational Theories And Living Theory Methodologies.

at

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera10/jwbera10individual310810.pdf>

My relationally dynamic framing is moving with my enquiry into the academic legitimization of educational theories that provide valid explanations of the educational influences in learning of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. I call these explanations, generated by individuals to explain their educational influences, living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989), to distinguish them from those 'derived' from the conceptual frameworks of the theories in the disciplines of education.

What is new in the 2011 AERA presentations is the inclusion of video-clips and visual narratives from my educational practice over the last 12 months to communicate the meanings of relationally dynamic, energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

What is original in this creative, relationally dynamic framing?

This year (2011-12) my research is located within the Centre for the Child and Family of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University. Dr. Joan Walton, the Director of the Centre has set out the strategic map for 2011 (Walton, 2010) and I am holding myself to account, in my research, to the guiding vision, orientation and philosophy of the Centre set out by Walton. The guiding vision and orientation of the Centre is to research and create knowledge which contributes to the evolution of a world in which humanity can flourish, through living values that have a humanising influence on children, families and wider society. The Centre supports the wider mission of the Faculty of Education in its aspirations to develop knowledge and understanding that will contribute to the education and wellbeing of all as a globally significant endeavour. Members of the Centre characterise all their work with values arising from love and hope.

The originality in this framing lies in the **relationally dynamic awareness** in my accounting for my productive life in terms of the values and research orientation of the Centre for the Child and Family. It includes the extensions in my cognitive range and concerns, from my immediate past practice over the last year. These include contributions in the following sociocultural contexts:

- i) The Council of Europe Pestalozzi programme with a keynote in Bergen, Norway in September 2010.
- ii) A seminar on living educational theories and action research in the Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic in November 2010.
- iii) The American Educational Research Association Meeting on the 1st May, 2010.
- iv) A keynote at a conference of the Action Research Unit of Nelson Mandela University in August 2010.
- v) A seminar on living educational theories at Durban University of Technology in November 2010.
- vi) Presentations on action research and living educational theories at the University of Saint Thomas and the Universidade Pedagogica of Mozambique in Maputo in October 2010.
- vii) A keynote at Covenant University in Lagos, Nigeria in a Workshop on Alternative Research Paradigms in February 2011.
- viii) The presentation of a Foundation Hour Lecture at Liverpool Hope University, UK in January 2011.
- ix) A keynote to celebrate the 125 year history of higher education at Edge Hill University, UK, in October 2010.

I shall return to the originality of the relationally dynamic awareness in the section below on the learning in social formations. In this section I shall use

video-clips of my presentations from the above contexts to communicate the originality and significance of my relationally dynamic awareness.

In contributing ideas from my research in these contexts I am seeking to encourage the development of knowledge and understandings in living educational theories that will contribute to the education and wellbeing of all. I am thinking of this contribution as a globally significant endeavour in distinguishing this work with values arising from love and hope. I know that love and hope are difficult expressions to operationalise in a shared discourse that is focused on practice. However I am hopeful that I can share my meanings of love and hope with the help of the following communications.

I am thinking of love as the expression of meaning in the signature of my e-mails:

When Martin Dobson, a colleague in the Department of Education at the University of Bath, died in 2002 the last thing he said to me was 'Give my Love to the Department'. In the 20 years I'd worked with Martin it was his loving warmth of humanity that I recall with great life affirming pleasure and I'm hoping that in Love Jack we can share this value of common humanity.

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<http://ejolts.net/>

I am also thinking of love in the sense expressed by Nigel Harrisson, the Director of the Education and Inclusion Service within the Children's Service of Bath and North East Somerset in the UK, in a BERA 2006 presentation to a symposium convened by Eleanor Lohr on Love at Work.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-MkVqaaM8>

What I mean by hope is the expression of life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity. This hope is evoked in and through me by Christine Jones' presence and communication in the video below. Christine is a Senior Inclusion Officer working with Nigel Harrison. Chris' presence and way of being evokes hope for me with an expression of life-affirming energy. Here is a video-clip of Christine, from her masters dissertation, where she is talking about an early experience with a teacher of feeling 'mortified', it is in her response to this experience that I feel a flow of life-affirming energy with hope.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXvrgS5xjdY>

What I now want to do is to focus your attention on something that you will not have seen before. These are video clips from some of my activities since my last presentation to AERA in Denver on the 1st May 2010 (Whitehead, 2010a). These activities include conference presentations, keynotes, workshops and seminars in the UK, Canada, South Africa, USA, Mozambique, Nigeria and Norway (I have also presented in Croatia and the Czech Republic but the video-clips are not yet available).

Bearing in mind my claim that my work is characterized by values emerging from love and hope, I want to focus on the use of the video-clips to communicate my meanings of 'relationally dynamic' and 'energy-flowing values' as explanatory principles in explanations of my educational influences in learning.

I cannot overemphasise the importance of a 'relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries'. Rayner (2011) refers to this awareness in terms of inclusionality and I shall use 'inclusionality' to distinguish a way of knowing, with this awareness, from the more traditional, propositional and dialectical ways of knowing (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

Before I show you the video clips in the context of the learning of social formations I want to say something about my own learning and the learning of others. I am doing this because of my commitment to generating living educational theories that explain educational influences in terms of one's educational influence in one's own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which one lives and works.

My own learning.

In visual narratives (Whitehead 2010b) I am claiming that the use of the video-clips from the different cultural and international contexts enables me not only to establish my loving and hopeful presence in these contexts but also to show

how the meanings of relationally dynamic and energy-flowing values can be communicated as explanatory principles in my own learning. I am speculating here about the extension of these ideas as I move into the future. For example, I am seeking to develop knowledge and understandings that will contribute to the education and wellbeing of all as a globally significant endeavour. I am assuming that encouraging others to generate and share their own living educational theories that explain why they are doing what they are doing in terms of values that carry hope for the future of humanity, is making a contribution to a globally significant endeavour. Whilst others have opened the spaces you see on the video-clips below, for my presentations, I am learning how to represent these spaces, through visual narratives, in ways that show, through the video-clips, the meanings flowing through national and cultural boundaries. This can perhaps best be seen in the contributions to the Educational Journal of Living Theories at <http://ejolts.net/> (Farren, Whitehead & Bognar, 2011)

The learning of others.

If you access Christine Jones' masters dissertation on 'How do I improve my practice as an inclusion officer working in a children's service?' at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/cjmaok/cjma.htm>, you will see Christine's acknowledgement that I have been 'a constant support and inspiration'. I think that you will see that I contributed to Christine's inspiration in her self-study of her own practice, with her willingness to ask, research and answering an 'I' question. I think that you will see that I helped to inspire Christine's use of a multi-media narrative in researching and answering her question. My contribution is not to detract in anyway from Christine's creativity, originality and scholarly accomplishment in gaining academic legitimation for the first multi-media living theory dissertation to be awarded from Bath Spa University.

On the 29th August 2009 my 65 Birthday I received a surprise gift. Robyn Pound popped round with a book called 'Jack Whitehead Validations'. You can access this at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jackvalidationsb.htm>. The book contains stories of my educational influence in the learning of others, mainly from former students. The gift was also to mark the ending of my tenured contract at the University of Bath on the 31st August 2009. The acknowledgement by others of my educational influences and which I offer her as evidence of my educational influence in the learning of others, continues to evoke flows of life-affirming energy that continue to contribute to my own motivations to continue with my work in education.

The learning of social formations.







What I meaning by an educational influence in the learning of a social formation can be understood in terms of a change in regulation governing the examination of research degrees at the University of Bath, and many other UK universities. Until 1991 the University of Bath had a regulation that prevented anyone from questioning the competence of examiners of research degrees once they had been appointed by Senate. This regulation, preventing the questioning of examiner's judgments under any circumstances, clearly violates the principle of academic freedom to question. It breaches the human right to question the ideas

of others. In 1991 this regulation was changed to permit questioning on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment. This is the kind of change I am meaning by an educational influence in the learning of social formations. It is a change in the regulation of a social formation in the direction of living more fully the values that carry hope for the future of humanity.

Another change in the rules governing a social formation is the acceptance, within Institutions of Higher Education that can award research degrees, that 'I' can be included in a title for a research degree.

Yet another change is in what counts as appropriate standards of judgment for research degrees. The academic legitimation of living theory theses in different universities around the world (see <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>) has meant that living standards of judgment have been legitimated in these Universities. I take it that such changes are part of the educational influences in the learning of social formations.

The table of video-clips below show me presenting ideas on living theories and action research in different international and cultural contexts and listening to the presentations of others, over the last 12 months. They serve as data that I intend to draw on in my future presentations as I continue to research the processes of extending the influence of values and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity, through the education of social formations with the creation of living educational theories. As I accept invitations to present in such different cultural contexts I am acutely aware of the issue of colonization and the tension between whilst believing that some of the values I am living carry hope for the future of humanity I could unwittingly be a carrier of a colonizing influence. In seeking to avoid being such an influence I offer my accounts to as wide an audience as possible in the hope that responses will draw my attention to both the dangers of colonization and the need to spread more widely the values and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity.

 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du5Ch-obhPA Jack Whitehead's Foundation Hour Presentation on the 12th January 2011 at Liverpool Hope University, UK.</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr6rPh0Hyds Jack Whitehead Launching B P Singh's book 'When the Chalk is Down' 30th October 2010, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LakZdFSXq80 Jack Whitehead in a question and answer session with Masters students from Brock University, Ontario, supervised by Jacqueline Delong 5th March 2011</p>
 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2aGdPXBSeI Part 1 of 2 of Jack Whitehead's presentation to BERA, UK, on the 02/09/10</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC-9w_EhAU0 Part 1 of 6 of Jack Whitehead's keynote to an Action Research Conference at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on 20/08/10</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp4ROizmdj8 Part 1 of 2 of Jack Whitehead introducing his paper on: 'Improving Practice-And Knowledge Through Time And Space With Complex Ecologies And Action Research.' to a conference on the American Educational Research Association</p>

 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOPVUiGDxoE Joan Walton emphasizing the importance of collaborative and inclusive enquiries and introducing Nigel Harrison, Head of the Education and Inclusion Service in the Children's service of Bath and North East Somerset UK and a doctoral researcher giving a 12:08 minute presentation on his research in the Centre for the Child and Family of Liverpool Hope University on the 12th January 2011.</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4_2VivFcQs A 5:03 minute clip from Jack Whitehead's presentation at the University of Saint Thomas in Maputo, Mozambique on the 26th October 2010. Jack is listening to the audience's responses to his question about what they value and what they might do about it.</p>	 <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQuFDsWfBkQ The introduction and beginning of Jack Whitehead's keynote on the 15th February 2011 to the Workshop on Alternative Research Paradigms at Covenant University in Lagos, Nigeria.</p>
<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SAgR7I3tKE The importance of sustaining our conversations. An extract from the last of three Committees of Enquiry at the Collaborative Action Research Network Conference on the 7th November 2010 in the Cambridge Arms Hotel, Cambridge, UK.</p>	<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTVS3mEUpyU Joan Conolly introduces Clementine Yeni's presentation at a seminar in Durban University of Technology on the 30th October 2010. Clementine's research is on <i>'The Role of Education in Land Restitution, Redistribution and Restrictions: Individual, Group and National Empowerment through Land Reform.'</i></p>	<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDcrI5B1gNo Jack Whitehead presenting a keynote on living educational theories and the validity of multimedia accounts at a Council of Europe Pestalozzi workshop on the 17th September 2010 in Bergen, Norway. Trygve Tollefsen of Bergen University College has posted the full playlist at: http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=29909A5B26B374C0</p>

As I continue to express and evolve my vocational commitment to contributing to educational theory I continue to learn from the ideas of others. Here are some of the ideas from other thinkers that have influenced my own thinking and contributed to the creation of my own living educational theory.

My vocational commitment to educational theory

My vocational commitment to the generation and communication of the living educational theories of individuals is because of my belief that these theories provide individuals with the opportunity to hold themselves to account for living as fully as they can the values that carry hope for the future of humanity. This commitment is closely related to my understanding of what it is for me to live as loving and productive life as I possibly can.

When thinking about the question of living a worthwhile life in my early twenties I encountered the work of Erich Fromm in the *Fear of Freedom* (1942) and *Man for Himself* (1947). In the 'Fear of Freedom', Fromm suggests that if an individual can face the truth without panic they will realize that there is no purpose to life other than the one they give to their life through their own loving relationships and productive work. In 'Man for Himself' Fromm distinguishes between the productive and marketing orientation of living. In the marketing orientation the individual is primarily influenced by capitalist principles that equate value with money. In the productive orientation the individual is primarily influenced by humanistic values that are concerned with hope for the future of humanity.

In my own life I understand both the importance of economic security and living as fully as one can the values that one identifies as carrying hope for the future of humanity. My vocational commitment to education began in 1967 with teaching science to 11-19 year olds in London Comprehensive Schools. It has changed over the years and is now focused on contributing to the academic legitimation, by Institutions of Higher Education, of the energy-flowing values that individuals use as explanatory principles in explaining their educational influences in learning. I am thinking of the principles that can also form the living standards of judgment that can be used to evaluate the validity of claims to knowledge in explanations of educational influence.

The growth of my own educational knowledge and generation of living theory has been influenced by my engagement with, and learning from, the ideas of others.

Engaging with the ideas of others

In previous publications (Whitehead, 1993, 2008) I have acknowledged the source of insights from the ideas of others, such as Polanyi and Habermas, that I have integrated within the generation of my own living educational theory as I explain my educational influences in learning.

My emphasis on the importance of 'influence' rather than 'causal effect' is because of my understanding that whatever I or others do in an educational relationship, there is some degree of freedom and creativity in the others response to whatever I or others do. I like the way Said (1997), emphasizes the importance of 'influence' in terms of correspondence between Valéry and Mallarme:

No word comes easier or oftener to the critic's pen than the word influence, and no vaguer notion can be found among all the vague notions that compose the phantom armory of aesthetics. Yet there is nothing in the critical field that should be of greater philosophical interest or prove more rewarding to analysis than the progressive modification of one mind by the work of another. (Said, p.15)

In choosing to explore the implications for improving practice and generating knowledge of asking, researching and answering my question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' I include values within judgments of what counts as an

improvement. I include a relationally dynamic awareness in focusing on what I am doing in particular, personal, social and environment contexts.

In terms of my understanding of relations in education I am most influenced by the ideas of Martin Buber. Buber says that trust in the world is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. He writes about the special humanity of the educator (Buber, 1947, p. 122) in holding under constant correction any desire to impose his or her hierarchical view of the world onto a pupil, by keeping the needs of the pupils at the forefront of the relation in education.

I am also aware that as I write the last sentence on the relation in education, my understandings are influenced by the following ideas of Lyotard on the postmodern condition by Alan Rayner on inclusionality, by Bateson on diversity and interdependence and by Guattari on three ecologies.

Whilst recognizing the power of sociocultural influences in what I do and think I follow Lyotard point that in expressing the art of living I am also working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done in the creation of my living educational theory:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. (Lyotard, p. 81, 1986)

Mary Catherine Bateson has helped me to recognise the importance of gender differences in ways of knowing. I accept her point about the need for sustained attention to diversity and interdependence with a sensitivity to ecological complexity:

But what if we were to recognize the capacity for distraction, the divided will, as representing a higher wisdom? Perhaps Kierkegaard was wrong when he said that 'purity is to will one thing'. Perhaps the issue is not a fixed knowledge of the good, the single focus that millenia of monotheism have made us idealize, but a kind of attention that is open, not focused on a single point. Instead of concentration on a transcendent ideal, sustained attention to diversity and interdependence may offer a different clarity of vision, one that is sensitive to ecological complexity, to the multiple rather than the singular. Perhaps we can discern in women honoring multiple commitments a new level of productivity and new possibilities of learning. (Bateson, p. 166, 1989)

Rayner (2011) has been most influential in extending my epistemological understandings from their grounding in propositional and dialectical thinking, into the relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries of inclusionality. This influence can be appreciated within my present emphasis on multi-media narratives that cross sociocultural boundaries such as those shown in the table of video-clips above.

The theme of AERA 2010 was 'Understanding Complex Ecologies In A Changing World'. In my presentation to AERA 2010 on 'Improving Practice And Knowledge Through Time And Space With Complex Ecologies And Action Research', I explained the influence of Guattari's (2000) three ecologies; mind, social and environmental, in the growth of my educational knowledge.

I am hoping that this creative, relationally dynamic framing for the four presentations at AERA 2011, within my intentions for the evolution of my research programme will resonate with your own energy-flowing values and stimulate your participation in enhancing these communications. What I have in mind is that you could make a similar contribution to enhancing the quality of my research to the one Nathan Brubaker made in his role as discussant at the 2010 American Educational Research Association. If you access the joint presentation to AERA 2011 by Jacqueline Delong and myself at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jdjwaera11.pdf> you will see on page 2 a video clip of Nathan Brubaker talking about the need for a strengthening of issues of validity in relation to explanations of educational influence that include multi-media representations. There are several ways you could share your own research programme and help me to strengthen my own. Perhaps the most helpful would be for you to join the practitioner-researcher e-forum at:

<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=practitioner-researcher&A=1>

and share your research programme with this extending network of practitioner-researchers. I do hope that you will do this as part of your own commitment to enhance the flow of values and understandings that can help to improve practice and carry hope for the future of humanity.

References

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