An autoethnography of my educational values

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Abstract

This article presents an autoethnography which I conducted to identify my educational values. The autoethnography was part of my doctoral work in which I theorised my professional practice as a marketing professor, according to Living Educational Theory and, as such, serves an alternative to the traditional action research of Living Educational Theory. The article begins by introducing Living Educational Theory, underlining its emphasis on educational values. It then introduces my doctoral work, explaining the rationale for autoethnography as an alternative to action research, and overviewing my living-educational-theory. The article continues by reviewing autoethnography as a research tradition. It then details the specific autobiographical and hermeneutic procedures which I employed to identify my educational values. Finally, the article presents my educational values, highlighting in particular my *Contextual* educational value, and demonstrating how it is evidenced in my public works.

Leo and Me

In his 1998 bestselling book 'How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day', author Michael Gelb posed a simple question: "Can the fundamentals of Leonardo's approach to learning be abstracted and applied to inspire and guide us toward the realization of our own full potential?". To answer this question, Gelb poured over his notebooks, examined his inventions, and appraised his works of art. The conclusion was a set of seven 'da Vincian' principles, which, Gelb suggested, defined the master and his approach to Art, Science, and Life. According to Gelb, and mirroring the sub-title of his book, he had unlocked the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, the essence of which readers of the book could emulate in their everyday lives.

Gelb's exercise in 'celebrity archeology' is reminiscent of Living Educational Theory Research, which is a paradigm in the academic discipline of Education in which teachers theorise their own professional practice. Using action research, the teacher reflects on their educational values, and on the practice-solutions, which were developed therefrom. The outcome is a living-educational-theory, which describes and explains their professional practice, with educational values as its elementary units. The teacher substantiates the living-educational-theory by demonstrating how the educational values are embodied in their professional practice.

In 2019, I registered for the Doctor of Professional Studies (by public works) degree at Middlesex University in London. I adopted Living Educational Theory Research as a means to position my public works both contextually and theoretically. In service of theorising my professional practice as a marketing educator, I conducted an autoethnography to identify my educational values, as an alternative to action research, which is the conventional research tradition of Living Educational Theory. To be clear, I make no claim to possess the genius of Leonardo da Vinci; my arrogance knows some bounds. But by conducting the autoethnography, I was able (paraphrasing Gelb) to abstract the fundamentals of my approach to teaching, and thereby inspire and guide myself toward the realisation of my own full potential. More *a propos*, my educational values served as the elementary units of my living-educational-theory.

The purpose of this article it to present the autoethnography which I conducted to identify my educational values. The article begins by introducing Living Educational Theory Research, underlining its emphasis on educational values. It then introduces my doctoral work, explaining the rationale for autoethnography as an alternative/complement to action research, and overviewing my living-educational-theory. The article continues by reviewing autoethnography as a research tradition. It then details the specific autobiographical and hermeneutic procedures that I employed to identify my educational values. Finally, the article presents my educational values, highlighting in particular my *Contextual* educational value, and demonstrating how it is evidenced in my public works.

Living Educational Theory Research

In the 1950s, both in-service and pre-service teachers in the United States were encouraged to reflect on their practices, and on the teaching profession more generally (Gore and Zeichner, 1991), as a way to:

> recognise problem areas, to imagine solutions, to try out solutions through a process of trial and error, to evaluate the outcomes and to modify the problems in light of the evaluation. (Whitehead, 1983, p. 175)

This 'teachers-as-researchers' movement made its way into classrooms in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s (Elliott and Sarland, 1995). It resulted in a new research-based professionalism among teachers that was grounded in theories from teachers' self-studies (Whitehead, 1998a).

By the early 1980s, this teachers-as-researchers movement had begun to challenge the orthodox view of scientific research in the academic discipline of education, by calling for a move:

> away from the narrow purpose of contributing to a field of knowledge toward a living inquiry that is integrated in the lives of all those involved (Reason, 1996, p. 15).

Indeed, this 'living inquiry' perspective embraced theory-building within bounded educational contexts (Hamilton, 1982), whose theories:

> could be viewed as being constituted by the descriptions and explanations which professional educators created for their own learning as they answered practical questions of the kind, 'How do I improve this process of education here?' (Whitehead, 1998c, p. 5)

By building theories of this type, teacher-researchers would demonstrate the methods by which they held themselves accountable for their professional practices (McNiff, 2007).

The key proponent of this new perspective of living inquiry in the United Kingdom was Jack Whitehead. In a 1991 article, he recalled that his:

> early methodological questions progressed into epistemological enquiries related to the values, logic, unit of appraisal and standards of judgment which could be used to test claims to know the nature and processes of education (Whitehead and Foster, 1984, p. 42).

Consequently, he began to formulate a paradigm for scientific research in the academic discipline of education, which became known as Living Educational Theory Research. It specified the rationale for, and the process by which, contributions to knowledge could be made by teachers.

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As they engage in Living Educational Theory Research, a teacher reflects on their own practice through which their, "philosophy of education is engaged as a first-person participant" (Whitehead, 1992, p. 1). They document these reflections in an account of their living-educational-theory which "includes the I's intention (a human goal) to produce something valued which is not yet in existence" (Whitehead, 1989, p. 4), and which captures in detail their educational values, and the solutions which were developed therefrom. By documenting these reflections, she/he claims to know their own professional practice, and subjects it to public scrutiny.

A distinctive feature of Living Educational Theory Research is its emphasis on educational values. Indeed, a living-educational-theory is characterized:

> by the explanatory power of the values and understandings which a teacher-researcher embodies in the explanation for their own learning as they work at living more fully their values and at extending their understandings. It is characterised by the use of the values and understandings as the standards of judgement they use to test the validity of their claims to educational knowledge (Whitehead, 1998b, p. 9).

Educational values, therefore, are not to be bracketed, as is common practice in more traditional scientific research in the academic discipline of education. On the contrary, a teacher who adopts Living Educational Theory Research recognizes educational practitioner research:

> is inherently value-laden because researcher values inevitably influence the choice of *phenomenon,* choice of *method*, choice of *data*, and choice of *findings* (Hirschman, 1986, p. 238).

In Living Educational Theory Research, however, educational values play an even more central role, because a teacher's professional practice cannot be divorced from their educational values. On the contrary, a teacher's educational values are embodied in their professional practice. Practice is always intentional action, shaped by values (Kemmis, 2009).

Consequently, a teacher who adopts Living Educational Theory Research uses their educational values as the explanatory principles in an account of their living-educational-theory which explicates their professional practice (Van Manen, 1990). Indeed, as suggested by Whitehead (1998c) each:

> … has represented their explanation for their own professional learning within their social context as a unique constellation of values, understandings and actions. They have communicated the meanings of their values and understandings as they emerge through time and action (p. 8).

In effect, therefore, educational values become the elementary units of a living-educational-theory. And accordingly, they also become the standards of judgement.

My Doctoral Work

In recent years, an alternative to the traditional real-time research of a doctoral degree has emerged. Known as a doctorate by publication or sometimes a doctorate by public works, it is:

> [a]warded on the basis of a [dissertation] containing a series of academic papers, books, cited works or other materials that have been placed in the public domain as articles that have been published, accepted for publication, exhibited or performed, accompanied by a substantial commentary linking the published work and outlining its coherence and significance, together with an oral examination at which the candidate defends his/her research (QAA, 2015, p. 7).

In short, the single tome-like dissertation is replaced with a collection of public works, which are bound together with a unifying explanation — a 'context statement', in the language of Middlesex University.

Within doctoral research (or any scientific research), a researcher can choose empiricism, phenomenology, or one of many other paradigms (Kuhn, 1970), which are on offer. But a researcher must choose. Indeed, according to Hirschman and Holbrook (1992), a researcher, "must make an *a priori* ideological commitment to one philosophical project (e.g., humanism) before undertaking research" (p. 2). In doing so, the researcher subscribes to a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions, methodological constraints, data collection and analysis traditions, judging criteria, and so on, which steer the doctoral research.

This mandate to choose a paradigm when conducting scientific research is perfectly logical to me. Early in my career, for example, I was influenced by semiotics — the science of signs and symbols — which I subsequently adopted for several marketing-related works. In 2011, I published an article about *Lexicon Rhetoricae*, the narrative theory of Kenneth Burke from the academic discipline of literary criticism, which, I demonstrated, can serve as a comprehensive model to explain how symbolism and non-conscious processes influence the experience of consumption. And in a recent study, I employed the philosophy and methods of praxiology, which give primacy to practice as both the focus of inquiry and the unit of analysis.

Admittedly, I was somewhat bewildered at the outset of the process in determining the statement of the context for my Doctor of Professional Studies (by public works) degree. What does a paradigm even mean for a doctorate by publication? If such a thing exists, is it possible to choose a paradigm *a posteriori*? And how can a collection of public works, which themselves might have followed different paradigms, be stitched together into a single narrative which demonstrates a contribution to knowledge?

By happenstance, when I began writing the context statement, I discovered Living Educational Theory Research, which seemingly addressed these concerns and which, consequently, I pursued as a means to position my public works both contextually and theoretically … with two caveats. First, whereas Living Educational Theory Researchers often use action research reflections cycles in which a practitioner reflects on their educational values, and on the practice-solutions, which were developed therefrom, I conducted an

autoethnography to identify my educational values. Action research is typically performed *in situ* by a practitioner who is acting as a researcher and a change-agent contemporaneously. Indeed, action research involves an iterative cycle, not unlike double loop learning (Argyris, 1991), in which a practitioner reflects on an existing practice, takes action to improve the practice, reflects on the outcomes of the action, reflects on the improvements which led to the outcomes, and so on. But I wrote the context statement ex post, as a retrospective on my public works … akin to Gelb's 'excavation' of da Vinci's principles.

Secondly, whereas it is customary for a practitioner to buttress the validity of their living-educational-theory with visual and/or lexical evidence — photographs, videos, journals, meeting minutes, and other ostensive artefacts of the practice that the living educational theory theorises — I buttressed the validity of my living-educational-theory with my public works. They are the evidence. They are the ostensive artefacts. Consequently, rather than substantiating my theoretical claim by demonstrating how my educational values are embodied in my professional practice, I examined how they are evidenced in my public works.

In summary, I adopted (the spirit of) Living Educational Theory Research as a means for positioning my public works both contextually and theoretically. Specifically, I theorised my professional practice as a marketing educator. However, I conducted an autoethnography as an alternative to action research, to identify my educational values; and instead of buttressing the validity of my living-educational-theory with visual and/or lexical evidence, I examined how my educational values are evidenced in my public works.

As an overview of my living-educational-theory, I theorised my professional identity as a marketing educator, as an analogy that 'teaching is like engineering'. Although I pinpointed my professional identity as a marketing educator very decisively, I remain an engineer at my core. I was an engineer before becoming a marketing educator. But my engineering 'brain 'developed much earlier — in my childhood when I was a modeller.

Accordingly, my approach to teaching is the approach of an engineer. When tasked with a new module, for example, I plan and execute it like an engineer. I treat a ninety-minute classroom session as if it were an engineering problem. And each case study or exercise, which I intend to use, is engineered, down to the board blueprint and pedagogical 'pastures'. Reflected in this teaching-is-like-engineering approach are my educational values, which I identified by conducting an autoethnography.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography appeared in the late twentieth century when:

scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines began to consider what social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than physics. (Ellis *et al*., 2011, p. 2)

Ethnographers, in particular,

could no longer hide behind or try to perpetuate an aura of objectivity and innocence; any attempt to do so signified at best a lack of awareness and at worst an abuse of research "subjects," as many of the ethnographers' observations came to suggest more about the

ethnographer and the ethnographer's agenda than about the cultural "others" being studied (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 2).

The first formal autoethnography is attributed to Kenyatta, the first president of independent Kenya, who published *Facing Mount Kenya* in 1962 (Hayano, 1979). It was attacked for being too personal and uncritical, but it signalled the possibility of ethnography from an 'insider's perspective', a notion which continued through the 1970s (Denshire, 2013). Heider (1975), for example, defined autoethnography as the practice of cultural members giving an account of their own culture. And for Hayano (1979), autoethnographers, "conduct and write ethnographies of their 'own people'" (p. 99).

During the 1980s and 1990s, however, the emphasis of autoethnography seemingly shifted from ethnography to its prefix *auto*. First, the importance of the autoethnographer's role in both the autoethnography and their culture came to the fore. Indeed, an autoethnographer was no longer considered a bystander whose intervention had no impact on the cultural phenomenon (Think *Star Trek*'s prime directive.). On the contrary, an autoethnographer was considered:

> a *participant observer* in that culture — that is, *by taking field notes* of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others' engagement with these happenings. (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p. 3)

The consequence of this autobiographical addition to autoethnography is that storytelling, which includes personal first-person narratives, was not only accepted but also encouraged as a part of ethnographic 'fieldwork'. Of course, an autoethnographer, "does not live through experiences solely to make them part of a published document' rather, these experiences are assembled using hindsight. " (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p. 2) But stories of these experiences, which are written after-the-fact, become the autoethnographer's data, with the autoethnographer herself/himself serving as the datasource.

Storytelling also emerged as a suitable method for representing knowledge. Indeed, an autoethnographer can use, "storytelling devices, such as narrative voice, character development, and dramatic tension, to create evocative and specific representations of the culture/cultural experience" (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). She/he leverages:

> storytelling facets (e.g., character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice … to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experiences … to facilitate understanding of a culture for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p. 4)

Today, autoethnography is common in a range of academic disciplines, including education, religious studies, and physiotherapy, and in a variety of professions (Denshire, 2013). But the purpose of autoethnography can vary from discipline to discipline, and from project to project — to, "speak against, or provide alternatives to, dominant, take-for-granted, and harmful cultural scripts, stories, and stereotypes" (Adams *et al.*, 2017), for example. There are also different autoethnographic types of research, which vary in terms of goal, analytical emphasis, power relationships, context, and the emphasis which is placed on the study of the self, others, or the interactions between self and others (Adams *et al.*, 2017;

Ellis *et al*., 2011). Similarly, autoethnography can vary in the weights which are attributed to the self (auto), culture (ethno), and description (graphy) (Reed-Danahey, 1997).

It ought to be obvious that, "the meanings and applications of autoethnography have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition difficult" (Ellinson and Ellis, 2008, p. 449). Indeed, this survey of autoethnography suggests that it is 'all over the place'. A binary typology, however, has sometimes been proffered as a means to reduce the autoethnographic variance: analytic versus evocative. Analytic autoethnography aims to, "describe and systematically analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand plural experience (*ethno*)" (Ellis *et al*., 2011, p. 1). It focuses on developing theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena from personal experience (Adams *et al*., 2017) — social phenomena which are, "broader than those provided by the data themselves" (Anderson, 2006, p. 387).

Evocative autoethnography, on the contrary, uses narrative to re-enact an experience by which an autoethnographer finds meaning (Bochner and Ellis, 2006). In doing so, it aims to open conversations among, and evoke emotional responses from, its readers. Evocative autoethnography foregrounds the autoethnographer's experience and focuses, "on life as 'lived through' in its complexities" (Adams *et al*., 2017, p. 8). In evocative autoethnography, therefore, autoethnographers immerse the reader into:

> the kinds of experience we might not ordinarily talk about publicly … [they] take the reader into the private cultural world of the author. (Turner, 2013, p. 213)

In either type, however, autoethnography differs from 'regular old' ethnography in that it embraces the ethnographer's lived experience, eschewing traditional fieldwork in favour of the autoethnographer's recollections of the experience. The autoethnographer serves as the researcher, the research instrument, and the research subject; and autoethnographies rely on a combination of autobiography and ethnography. In summary, autoethnography makes, "use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experiences" (Holman Jones *et al.* 2013, p. 22).

These defining characteristics, however, have made the mainstream scientific community sceptical of autoethnography. The reliance on lived experience, for example, has resulted in autoethnographers being labelled as journalists or 'soft' scientists (Denshire, 2013). The multifaceted role of the autoethnographer has led to cries that autoethnography is bias-laden. Evocative autoethnography in particular has been viewed as too personal, and lacking in theoretical relevance (Maréchal, 2010). And in one of those apparent 'cannot win' situations, the reliance on a combination of autobiography and ethnography means that "autoethnography is criticised for either being too artful and not scientific, or too scientific and not sufficiently artful" (p. 8).

Burnier (2006) countered the sceptics, suggesting at the outset that the binary distinction between analytic and evocative is forced. Autoethnographies, he implored, can be both analytical and evocative, both personal and scholarly, and both descriptive and theoretical. Ellis *et al*. (2011) concurred, arguing that:

> [a]utoethnographers believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical *and* emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena … Autoethnographers also value the need to write and represent research in evocative, aesthetic ways. (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p. 9)

Skeptics notwithstanding, I adopted autoethnography as the research tradition to identify my educational values, in service of theorising my professional practice as a marketing professor. As for the analytic versus evocative distinction, the focus on my educational values (auto), rather than the plural experience (ethno), suggests that I conducted an evocative autoethnography. Truthfully, I also felt compelled to elaborate my educational values in a more aesthetic way, likewise pointing to evocative autoethnography. However, irrespective of the specific type of autoethnography which I conducted, I employed autobiography as the 'data', and hermeneutics as the 'analytical tool'.

Autobiographical and Hermeneutic Procedures

I began the autoethnography by writing my autobiography … of sorts. I qualify with 'of sorts' because I did not chronicle my entire life from first memories up to the present day. Instead, I described specific events in my life which have been instrumental in my development. Indeed, following Ellis *et al*. (2011), I keyed in on 'epiphanies':

> remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life, times of existential crises that forced a person to attend to and analyse lived experience, and events after which life does not seem quite the same …When epiphanies are self-proclaimed phenomena in which one person may consider an experience transformative while another may not, these epiphanies reveal ways a person could negotiate 'intense situations' and 'effects that linger' — recollections, memories, images, feelings — long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished. (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p. 3)

I wrote the autobiography over a two-month period in summer 2019, drawing on some earlier autobiographical work, which I completed as part of a Master of Arts in Education degree with which I graduated in 2003. My autobiography includes both descriptions of specific events in my life which have been instrumental in my development (the epiphanies), and my reflections on these events (see Appendix 1 for an excerpt). The rhetoric is informal and conversational in tone, consistent with both Living Educational Theory and autoethnography. I isolated my reflections from the main text with *italics*.

In the reflections, I attempted to re-frame the specific events in my life in a new context, which enabled me to view them from a different perspective— a methodological sleight of hand which Schön (1983) called a frame experiment. The reflections were necessary because, as suggested by MacLure (1996), an interpretive researcher must move "backwards to the past and forward again in order to try to make sense of the present" (p. 273). In other words, the reflections precipitated movement from my autobiography being simply a description of the specific events that were instrumental in my development, as well as being an explanation of why these specific events were instrumental in my development. Indeed, the reflections, to some degree, helped me transform the events of the autobiography into *meaningful* events.

In order to identify my educational values, I followed a hermeneutic procedure. Broadly speaking, hermeneutics is the science of interpretation (Allen and Jensen, 1990). It gained popularity in the seventeenth century as a term to describe Biblical studies (Thiselton, 1992), but:

> a disciplined approach to interpretation can be traced back to the ancient Greeks studying literature and to biblical exegesis in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Today it informs interpretive research throughout the social sciences.

As a mode of understanding, hermeneutics keys in on the 'meaning-full forms' (Betti, 1980) which are bound up in the "contextualized personal expressions of an individual" (Arnold and Fischer, 1994, p. 61) — known in hermeneutics as the text (Ricoeur, 1981). To re-experience, re-cognise, and re-think these meaning-full forms through an interpretation of the text is to achieve hermeneutic understanding (Bleicher, 1980).

A hermeneutic procedure typically begins with an interpretive reading of the text, the aim of which is an initial understanding of its meaningful forms (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This is followed by a breaking-down of the text into elements, by transforming the text using clusters (Ellen, 1984), themes (Boyatzis, 1998), or categories (Spiggle, 1994). This transformation is most often executed by using codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) – conceptual labels which assign specific meanings to the text (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The elements are then re-constructed in a new way, thereby generating a new understanding of the text. This process of breaking-down and re-constructing continues, the goal of which is the resolution of contradictions among and between the elements and the text (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). That is to say, with continuous movement back and forth from the text to the elements (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and an on-going seesaw between interpretation and understanding, we:

> transform the data into something it was not … We break down the data in order to classify it, and the concepts we create or employ in classifying the data, and the connections we make between these concepts, provide the basis of a fresh description [of the text]" (Dey, 1993, p. 30).

After completing my autobiography, I followed a hermeneutic procedure in which I treated the autobiography as a 'Ricoeur-ian' text. I began with an interpretive reading of my autobiography to yield an initial understanding of the educational values which were embedded in it. I then started breaking down my autobiography into meaning-full elements, using a paper-based coding and indexing system. More specifically, I developed codes for different meanings, and indexed all instances of these meanings by tagging the textual units in my autobiography which demonstrated the codes. An example of a code was *Technology*, which I tagged to ten textual units in my autobiography. I then reconstructed these codes in a new way, thereby yielding a new understanding of my autobiography as a whole. This process of coding, indexing, and theorising continued until I believed that I had resolved the contradictions among and between the elements of the autobiography and the autobiography as a whole. The final result of this hermeneutic procedure was a fresh description of my autobiography – specifically, my educational values.

Neither a description of hermeneutics nor the details of the hermeneutic procedure, however, capture fully the interpretive logic by which my educational values were abstracted from my autobiography. I offer the following example from the hermeneutic procedure, therefore, to provide a more concrete illustration of hermeneutics 'at work'.

In the opening paragraph of my autobiography, I recounted my fascination with modeling, which, over time, evolved into automotive restoration, and, most recently, into house renovation. In my first hermeneutic iteration, I indexed this and other instances in my autobiography which intimated a passion for 'building stuff', with the *Construction* code. I played around with this theme, recalling my four years of undergraduate engineering studies, and the many summers which I spent working at a foundry in my hometown in Canada.

This *Construction* code felt forced, however, and after additional iterations which led to other alternative codes including *DIY* and *Engineer*, I remembered a concept from my marketing world which is called marketing myopia. In short, marketing myopia refers to the tendency of marketers to focus on the features of a product, rather than on the benefits which a consumer derives therefrom.

It dawned on me that I had been focusing (myopically) on the act of construction, rather than on the benefits, which were derived therefrom. In other words, I realised that I loved construction in all forms, not because of construction *per se*, but because of what construction provided to me, what it allowed me to do, and what it enabled me to achieve. Consequently, I re-worked the *Construction* code into three elements (benefits in the language of marketing), *Experiential*, *Innovation*, and *Technology*, which, at the conclusion of the hermeneutic procedure, became three of my educational values (See Table 1 for a summary).

My Educational Values

With reference to Table 1, I believe that students participate in Higher Education purposefully, but that the purpose of Higher Education is equivocal. That is to say, Higher Education is not happenstance for students. On the contrary, they elect to enter such institutions of their own free will … but they do so for different reasons. In parallel, Higher Education institutions operate under different philosophical assumptions, they hold different strategic postures, and they seek different organisational and societal outcomes. As a professor, therefore, I engage in Higher Education critically.

I believe that Higher Education ought to be student-centred. This belief is premised on the philosophical notion that knowledge is constructed – that people are born into a meaningless world, and that this world only becomes meaningful when they ascribe meaning to it. Consequently, Higher Education is about learning, not teaching. Students are not passive receivers of information; they are active constructors of knowledge. As a professor, therefore, I do not transmit information, I facilitate learning.

Table 1.   A Summary of My Educational Values

Educational Value	Meaning	Professional Practice
1. Critical	• The form and function of Higher Education is equivocal	• I engage in Higher Education critically
2. Learner-Centred	• Higher Education is about learning, not teaching	• I facilitate learning
3. Conceptual	• Knowledge is conceptually-mediated	• I establish conceptual foundations
4. Contextual	• Knowledge and learning are contextual	• I account for contextual differences
5. Experiential	• Learning occurs through experience	• I curate experiences
6. Scaffolding	• Students need guidance to learn effectively	• I scaffold learning
7. Assessment	• Students learn in different ways and at different rates	• I assess learning
8. Storytelling	• People 'storify' their worlds	• I tell stories
9. Innovation	• Higher Education can be improved	• I innovate
10. Technology	• Educational technologies continue to evolve	• I experiment with educational technologies

I believe that knowledge is mediated conceptually. Human understanding of the world consists of a Peircian triad of an object (a tangible or intangible thing), the sign (or *representamen*) which is used to symbolise the object, and the conceptualisation (or *interpretant*) of the object. Conceptual meaning consists of a linguistic structure, which links concepts together in a cognitive schema. In simple(r) terms, concepts are mental abstractions of reality and they are the building-blocks of knowledge. As a professor, therefore, I establish conceptual foundations.

I believe that all human knowledge is contextual. Indeed, the meanings, which people ascribe to the world, are not immune to their extant knowledge, to cultural backgrounds, or to their personal circumstances. Likewise, learning is contextual. People do not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, learning occurs within specific learning environments, the characteristics of which impact the mechanisms of learning. As a professor, therefore, I account for contextual differences.

I believe that learning occurs through experience – that the natural learning process is enhanced if learning is grounded in life experiences. I follow Kolb (1984), who models learning as a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation, and who, accordingly, defines experiential learning as the mental process by which knowledge is constructed through the transformation of experience. As a professor, therefore, I curate experiences.

I believe that all people have the capacity to learn, but often need to be guided and supported in their learning. This guidance and support mirror the idea of scaffolding which was introduced by Wood *et al*. (1976), and which analogises the activities which are provided by a teacher to students as they move through the 'zone of proximal development'. As a professor, therefore, I scaffold learning.

I believe that students learn in different ways and at different rates. Learning is not linear, and the pace at which students learn varies. Consequently, the assessment of learning is a central activity of Higher Education, which ought to be implemented throughout (and not only at the conclusion of) a student's learning journey, and which ought to draw on different assessment methods. As a professor, therefore, I assess learning.

I believe that people are 'natural' storytellers. Indeed, I agree with the fundamental proposition in Jonathan Gottschall's (2012) book, that one of the abilities which distinguishes *homo sapiens* from other primates is storytelling. The corollary of this proposition - one I have witnessed throughout my career - is that people 'storify' their worlds: they think in stories, they share their lives in stories, they learn from stories. As a professor, therefore, I tell stories.

I believe that Higher Education can be improved. Indeed, Higher Education is always tentative – in a permanent state of flux – and has no end point, thereby recalling the proverbial journey rather than the destination. This tentativeness is caused by endogenous innovation by teachers, students, and other people engaged with Higher Education who work continually to make it better – a process which Schumpeter (1975) called 'creative destruction'. As a professor, therefore, I innovate.

Finally, I believe that educational technologies continue to evolve, as innovators adapt extant technologies, or create new technologies altogether, in service of improving Higher Education. Educational technologies need not be high tech, and not all new educational technologies improve teaching and learning. As a professor, therefore, I experiment with educational technologies.

Now, as I mentioned previously, I felt compelled to elaborate my educational values in a more aesthetic way. Indeed, I attempted to articulate each educational value so that it captured my meaningful experiences, and evoked emotional responses. I also demonstrated how each educational value was evidenced in my public works. The following is a more detailed explanation of my *contextual* educational value.

According to IMDb, *The Wizard of Oz* ranks as the eighth best film of all time. It is certainly among my favourite films (although the flying monkeys continue to scare the wits out of me). The characters are adorable. Who does not love the lion, the scarecrow, and the tin man? The lyrics and melodies are memorable. Try reading the following words without

breaking into song: "We're off to see the Wizard … " And at the end of the day, *The Wizard of Oz* is simply a wonderful story.

The film is also full of numerous phrases that have entered the lexicon of contemporary culture. Consider, "You're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy", for example, which is an adaptation of Dorothy's worrisome patter to her dog, Toto, and which connotes the notion of being in a foreign or uncomfortable setting. Think about the semantic power of the simple utterance, "The witch is dead". And seeing 'behind the curtain' certainly took on new gravity after people saw the wizard make a frenzied plea into his microphone to "[p]ay no attention to that man behind the curtain!"

The phrase from *The Wizard of Oz,* which resonates with me most, however is from the scene that leads up to the dénouement of the film. Dorothy is distraught after the hot air balloon, which is intended to transport her home to Kansas, rises accidentally without her. Glinda the Good Witch appears and then informs Dorothy that, having possessed the power all along, she need only close her eyes, click her heels together, and repeat the incantation, "There's no place like home".

In my opinion, there is no place like home. Indeed, my experience suggests that people are most comfortable among like-minded people in their native environments, which is probably due to culture! There are myriad definitions of the concept of culture, the enumeration of which is beyond the scope of this article. But a common notion among anthropologists, sociologists, and other scientists who study the concept is that culture has a normalising effect. Culture defines what people believe is true, beautiful, appropriate, proper, correct, and so on. Consequently, when someone acts in a way, which is deemed deviant, society puts pressure on her/him to be, 'normal'. Similarly, when someone is dropped into a foreign situation, which is characterised by cultural differences, they feel uncomfortable, become judgemental, and in some cases, dismiss the cultural differences outright.

It is this normalising effect of culture, which is the root of my *Contextual* educational value. In short, I believe that, as a professor, I must embed learning in the culture of the students, because they are products of their culture. Indeed, I must consider culture in my curriculum and instructional design. I must ensure the cultural relevance of my teaching materials. And I must facilitate the construction of knowledge among my students in culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways.

A broadening of this idea of cultural embeddedness is that learning does not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, people cannot escape their surroundings, the stimuli of which influence their learning, consciously or non-consciously. In other words, learning is contextual. As a professor, therefore, I must consider the learning context in my instructional design.

My *Contextual* educational value is evidenced most prominently by the numerous cases that I have written during my career, eighteen of which were published in the past decade. The case method is a powerful tool within the broad pedagogical movement and is known variously as problem-based learning, action-learning, or experiential learning. But for me, cases work best if they are situated in the cultural context of students. That is to say, learning occurs more naturally when a case mirrors students' reality.

This link between culture and learning became apparent to me during my time living and working in Uzbekistan. The cases to which I had access, and which I was using in my train-the-trainer sessions, were about large North American multi-national companies, which faced typically North American commercial challenges, whose customers were North American. Not a single thing about these cases was familiar to my students and, not surprisingly, they had difficulty learning from the cases. Consequently, I now almost always write my own cases about companies that are known to my students, which face commercial challenges of their sort, and whose settings are culturally proximate. My most recent case illustrates this approach.

Transforming Culture in the Kingdom: How Saudi Telecom Focused on People to Compete in the Digital Age explores the methods by which the former CEO of Saudi Telecom Corporation transformed this once staid, consumer-unfriendly, and inefficient public telecommunications provider, into a dynamic, responsive, and globally competitive corporation. Interestingly, despite the economic growth and importance of the Middle East, few cases exist about companies from the region, or about companies, which operate in the region. My case fills this void (a little) and is particularly powerful because it documents a challenge, which many public companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia face as they transition to the private sector. The case also captures some of the cultural nuances of the Kingdom, including the power hierarchies of Saudi society, the male-female traditions, which continue to exist there, and the central role of Islam in an Arab's daily life.

The case is published and sold by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan, the University's special unit, which focuses on business in emerging and transitional economies. The case can also be purchased from Harvard Business School. In the late 2000s, I founded WDI Publishing. Over a two-year period, I hired, trained, and managed a team of case writers; I developed a catalogue of nearly 200 different products, including cases, notes, and role play exercises, and I launched an e-commerce distribution 'business' to sell these products. The impetus for WDI publishing was the general lack of international cases at Harvard Business School, the European Case Clearing House, and the other principal case publishers.

The central role of culture in learning can also be found in my article *One Size Does Not Fit All: Localization in the Age Globalization* which appeared in *BizEd* magazine. In the article, I noted that the homogenising forces of globalisation of the early 1980s had reinforced a kind of standardisation (probably more like the 'Americanisation') of business schools around the world: undifferentiated curricula, similar instructional methods, and even common U-shaped style classrooms. I argued in the article, however, that the cultural and contextual differences which persist despite globalisation – perhaps even because of globalisation – have more recently led many business schools leaders to follow a localisation strategy, by operating in concert with, not in opposition to, these cultural and contextual differences. The result is localised instructional materials, localised school branding, and even localised business models.

Switching to learning context, my *contextual* educational value is also evidenced in my anthology *Learning Spaces in Higher Education,* which was published in 2014 under the aegis of *LiHE*. Its thesis is simple: professors ought to be proactive in the design of learning spaces. Chapters in the anthology explore this notion in both the physical and virtual worlds,

the latter being especially timely considering the ubiquity of both Internet-based distance learning, and the so-called flipped classroom which typically leverages various modes of e-learning.

In a chapter from a different *LiHE* anthology, I likewise pursued this notion of the design of a learning space, but with a view towards the inclusion of students. A more thoughtful approach – to which audio and visual equipment is used in a classroom, for example – will help to ensure that students with different perceptual abilities are treated fairly. More importantly, it will increase the probability that all students will learn.

L'Uomo Vitruviano[1]

This article presented an autoethnography which I conducted to identify my educational values. It was part of my doctoral work in which I theorised my professional practice as a marketing professor, according to Living Educational Theory. I conducted the autoethnography as an alternative to action research, which is the conventional research tradition of Living Educational Theory.

Truthfully, I now question the use of the term alternative. In his many writings, Whitehead invoked, implicitly or explicitly, action research as the conventional research tradition of Living Educational Theory (although to be fair, he provided little methodological guidance). I used the term alternative in an almost defensive way, claiming the need for specific procedures in the absence of methodological guidance and, as explained previously, because of the retrospective nature of the Doctor of Professional Studies (by public works).

After revisiting Whitehead's writings, however, I realise that I interpreted his invocation of action research from my perspective as a scientist. That is to say, I assumed that action research was meant to be the 'scientific' research-tradition of Living Educational Theory Research, which is employed by a teacher as they construct a living-educational-theory, which explicates their professional practice. Indeed, I was viewing the teacher's living-educational-theory as a scholarly product, which is published at a specific moment in time for the Academy and, as such, requires a methodology section.

A more nuanced interpretation of Whitehead's invocation of action research, on the contrary, suggests that he considered action research as the 'natural' research tradition by which a teacher constructs their living-educational-theory, not as a one-off scholarly exercise but as part of their quotidian routine. In other words, action research is how a teacher addresses everyday practical questions of the kind, 'How do I improve this process of education here?' (Whitehead, 1998c, p. 5).

This more nuanced interpretation is captured in the title of Whitehead's 2018 book *Living Theory Research as a Way of Life*, and parallels the definition by Reason and Bradbury (2001) which suggests that action research is:

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[1] This derives from 'The Vitruvian Man', by Leonardo da Vinci (1490), which was a representation of the proportions of the human body.

a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes… It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concerns to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 1)

Consequently, action research, with its focus on practical solutions, can be considered, "the guiding method by which [people] organise everyday inquiries and actions" (Chandler and Torbert, 2003, p. 134). And this includes the inquiries and actions of teachers regarding Living Educational Theory Research.

From a methodological perspective, therefore, Living Educational Theory Research is not wedded to action research. Indeed, in his 2018 book *Living Theory Research as a Way of Life*, Whitehead called for 'methodological inventiveness', suggesting that a variety of research traditions are both valid and warranted in Living Educational Theory Research. This suggestion was also articulated by Bigger (2021), who wrote that:

[q]ualitative methodologies are not competitors [to action research] but methodological 'cousins' with helpful ideas for LET research, LET bringing a unique focus through its concern for personal and professional development. (p. 72)

Accordingly, I shall re-word the opening to this discussion section. I conducted an autoethnography to identify my educational values, not as an alternative to action research, but simply as part of my doctoral work in which I theorised my professional practice as a marketing educator, according to Living Educational Theory.

Even so, it could be argued that I actually conducted an autophenomenography or perhaps an auto-hermeneutic study. The distinction is vague in the literature. Both aim to reveal a person's lived experience of a discrete phenomenon from their own perspective, rather than a cultural feature, a picture of which autoethnography seeks to paint. Lived experience and culture, however, are often deemed inseparable (Gorichinaz, 2017). In addition, my use of autobiography as the data source points to autoethnography as the research tradition.

It is the conceptualisation of autoethnography which was articulated by Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013) in the introduction to their *Handbook of Autoethnography*, which fortifies my belief that I conducted an autoethnography, and which reinforces the use of autoethnography as a methodological cousin in Living Educational Theory. According to Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis, autoethnographies comment on and critique culture and cultural practices. I conducted the autoethnography to identify my educational values, in service of theorising my professional practice as a marketing educator. My teaching is a cultural practice, in that it embodies my educational values, which emerged not in a vacuum but in a community of practice, which has its own cultural structures, vernacular, *etc.*. Consequently, this autoethnography is indeed a comment on cultural practice, parts of which will, I hope, resonate with members of my community of practice.

Autoethnographies also make contributions to existing research, by contributing to the scholarly conversation about the phenomenon of interest. Indeed, it is this characteristic, which, "marks autoethnography as *scholarship* in contrast with writing that

does not work to contribute to scholarly conversation" (Jones, Adams, and Ellis, 2013, p. 23). Living Educational Theory has elevated the importance of educational values, by establishing them as the elementary units of a living-educational-theory. Indeed, as mentioned previously, a teacher uses their educational values as the explanatory principles in a living-educational-theory, which explicates their professional practice. Consequently, by identifying and articulating my educational values and, in turn, by demonstrating how they are evidenced in my public works, I contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation of educational values and Living Educational Theory.

As an aside, I made a somewhat arbitrary – maybe even slightly misleading – distinction between my teaching practice and my scientific research and writing. As mentioned previously, rather than substantiating the theoretical claim in my living-educational-theory by demonstrating how my educational values are embodied in my professional practice, I examined how they are evidenced in my public works. It was an expedient decision which corresponded to the retrospective nature of a Doctor of Professional Studies (by public works). I do indeed regard my professional practice as a marketing educator within my community of practice, as intentional action which is shaped by my educational values; and both my teaching practice and my scientific research and writing constitute my professional practice as a marketing educator. In subsequent research to my doctoral work, therefore, I plan to demonstrate how my educational values are also embodied in my teaching practice.

Returning to the notion that autoethnographies make contributions to existing research, this autoethnography of my educational values if viewed more broadly, and Living Educational Theory Research in general, contribute to axiology – the philosophy of value. Axiology dates back to Plato and Aristotle, both of whom deliberated over the link between values and such things as aesthetics and citizenship, for example (Munson, 1984). Its modern configuration can be traced to the academic community of nineteenth century Germany (Werkmeister, 1970). Doubtless, axiologists would revel in the central role that educational values play in Living Educational Theory Research and would be interested in the autoethnography which I conducted to identify my educational values.

According to Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013), autoethnography is characterised by the notion that an autoethnographer embraces vulnerability with purpose, eschewing discomfort in favour of exposing secrets. Although the educational values, which I identified by conducting the autoethnography, appear relatively benign at first glance, the autobiography of sorts which I wrote is extremely personal. Indeed, it makes public many events, experiences, and emotions which I had heretofore kept secret. I also elaborated my educational values in a more aesthetic way, attempting to articulate each educational value so that it captured my meaningful experiences, and evoked emotional responses. However, in doing so I revealed much about myself and my life, and opened myself to disapproval, mockery, and even contempt.

An autoethnographer also welcomes reciprocity with audiences, by writing an ethnography which "explicitly acknowledges, calls to and seeks contributions from audiences as part of the ongoing conversation of the work" (Jones, Adams, and Ellis, 2013, p. 25). By sharing my work, I expect feedback (or perhaps 'feedforward' is a more appropriate term in this instance) from readers, which will motivate changes to this autoethnography,

and which will, more substantively, lead to a 're-identification' of my educational values. Comments from auditors who read my autoethnography, comments from reviewers of this article, and comments from members of my doctoral committee, have influenced my thinking.

As a specific example, Jack Whitehead himself served on the examination committee for my Doctor of Professional Studies. During the defence, he recalled my use of the concept of love to introduce one of my ten educational values. But he proceeded by noting that my living-educational-theory itself is devoid of love, and a short conversation about the concept of love in professional practice ensued. As a reminder, love and other 'positive' concepts figure prominently in his writings. Consider the following statement, for example, "[t]he explanatory principles in the living-theory explanations are energy-flowing values embodied and expressed in practice" (Whitehead, 2009, p. 87).

Consequently, since my *viva voce* I have been pondering the question, 'What's love got to do with it?' Is love the motivating force behind my professional practice? What does it mean when I proclaim that I love my job? And how, if at all, does love factor into the way in which I serve my students?

Admittedly, my living-educational-theory was devoid of love. I certainly hope that my context statement does not read as a dispassionate treatise on my teaching – that my professional practice which I theorised as an analogy that 'teaching is like engineering' does not paint me as some robotic, heartless, and mechanistic marketing educator, because the opposite is true. I am passionate about my profession. The stay-at-home measures, which were implemented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and which kept me out of the classroom, left me feeling empty. And although it sounds somewhat sentimental, I consider students to be my *raison d'être*.

Love, it seems, has got a lot to do with it. The concept of love as the propelling force of my professional practice, and perhaps as an ingredient of my living-educational-theory, conjures up the Japanese concept of 'Ikigai'. Translated as 'a reason for being', Ikigai sits at the confluence of four dimensions: 1. what you love; 2. what the world needs; 3. what you can be paid for; and 4. what you are good at (see Figure 1). According to Garcia (2017), Ikigai defines the meaningfulness in your life. It is akin to Maslow's idea of self-actualisation. It is what makes you, "jump out of bed each morning" (Oppong, 2018).

Image 1. Ikigai Adapted from "How to ..." (2020)

I use Ikigai frequently, usually when counseling students (both young and old) about their post-business school careers. And I almost always refer to myself as a 'poster child' for Ikigai, boasting that I have found that sweet spot at the confluence of the four dimensions. I wonder, therefore, if a valuable supplement to Living Educational Theory Research might be (as I have begun to sketch out here) an exploration of the engine of professional practice. Indeed, it might be worth including love, passion, compulsion, conviction, or other conative force, which motivates professional practice, as a key component of a living-educational-theory.

This concept of love also brings to mind the philosophy of servant leadership, which has recently gained popularity in both the management and popular literature. Servant leadership inverts the traditional hierarchical view of organisations in which a leader 'commands' employees from on high, emphasising instead that servant leaders situate employees above them, and aim to empower and uplift them (The Art of Servant Leadership, 2020) An interesting twist on servant leadership, therefore, might revolve around the concept of love in the context of professions, and more specifically, around the 'obligation' to serve students, which many professors seemingly feel.

I also see now that the reciprocity with audiences – which Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013) specified as a characteristic of autoethnography, and which I illustrated with these musings about the concept of love in professional practice – strengthens the modifier 'Living' in Living Educational Theory. Indeed, a living-educational-theory, is always tentative – in a permanent state of flux – evolving with each new life event, for example, or with technological advancements and, of course, with changes to educational values. Bigger (2021) alluded to this tentativeness when he conjured Foucault's 'archaeology of knowledge', which posits that knowledge is temporally and contextually bound. Consequently, a living-educational-theory – which likewise is a product of its time and place – is, as intimated by Bigger, more of a journey than a destination.

In the Introduction to their *Handbook of Autoethnography,* Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013) also enumerate five purposes of autoethnography that make it unique and compelling as a research tradition: 1. disrupting norms of research practice and representation; 2. working from insider knowledge; 3. manoeuvring through pain, confusion, anger, and uncertainty, and making life better; 4. breaking silence, (re)claiming voice, and writing to right; and 5. making work accessible. Reflecting on my autoethnography regarding these five purposes leads me to the conclusion that autoethnography can be a unique and compelling research- tradition for Living Educational Theory. I hope that this article has demonstrated that.

What is very clear to me, however, is that autoethnography has enabled me to identify my educational values, and subsequently to clarify and build on my existing sense of who I am as a marketing professor. By elaborating my educational values and demonstrating how they are evidenced in my public works, I have also become a more conscious professor. Consequently, I am now invested in my public works beyond the public works themselves, because I recognise that they are not only the output of my scientific research and writing,

but also an expression of my educational values. Similarly, I am aware that the curricular, instructional, and other pedagogical decisions, which I make as a marketing professor, are not arbitrary but likewise reflect my educational values.

I certainly wonder if Michael Gelb would have identified the same educational values if he had studied me using his da Vinci method, which I overviewed in the Introduction. Indeed, I wonder if he would have abstracted a different set of fundamentals of my approach to teaching. More generally, I wonder whether other research traditions with different epistemological assumptions and methodological tools, would have led me to identify different educational values.

Whatever the case, this doctoral work, in which I theorised my professional practice as a marketing professor according to Living Educational Theory Research, has been a worthwhile and rewarding exercise. Through it, I have come to know myself as a marketing professor, by observing the role that my educational values have in shaping my professional practice. Consequently, I encourage other professors to engage in this 'archeology of the self', abstracting the fundamentals of their approaches to teaching. In doing so, I am confident that they will also become more conscious professors, aware of how their educational values shape their professional practices. And in the spirit of Leonardo da Vinci, they might use these educational values to inspire and guide themselves toward the realisation of their own full potential … toward a kind of *l'uomo vitruviano*.

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