Intention and Reflection, Doing and Dialogue

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Abstract

In this paper I express what doing and thinking means to me, working as a teacher-educator and as a researcher in Social Science. I explain how developments in the current era affect the intention and actions in the field of practice in education. In my professional practice, a number of theories and methodologies are important to me, such as Socratic dialogues, human flourishing, Participatory Action Research, and Living Educational Theory Research. I use these to express my values, as well as my experiences in practice and the perceptions of others. It is valuable to have mapped out these values and perception of others. I conclude that not only are my own values important, but working from a collective intention strengthens the actual contribution to the field of practice.

Introduction: Doing and Thinking

An excessive focus on outcomes is a huge concern in education (Biesta, 2010). In Dutch vocational education, the government and the business community mainly focus on 'what' vocational education should deliver (Bronneman-Helmers, 2011; Van Kan, Zitter, Brouwer & Van Wijk, 2014). Too little consideration is given to the questions of 'why' education must be provided and 'how' this can best be done (Biesta, 2010; Van Kan *et al.*, 2014). The question to what is desirable in education, is linked by Biesta (2010) to values-based education. Imelman (2017) points out that, in the Netherlands, politics interferes too much and too often in education. Imelman (*ibid*.) uses the work of Derbolav in order to indicate that every field of practice has an intention that guides its actions. In Dutch education, politics interferes in such a way that it prescribes too much how this practice should be (Imelman, *ibid*.). This Dutch emeritus professor of theoretical and historical education and pedagogy states that politicians do not have the expertise, so they cannot be held accountable for unintended consequences; the expertise lies within the field of practice. Imelman (*ibid*.) uses the following comparison: should politics dictate strategy on the battlefield? The answer to me is that politics is responsible for the overarching goal, but implementation, evaluation and adjustment must be the first responsibility of the field of practice. Continuous interferences by politicians with insufficient expertise of the field of practice distracts from the intention and action in practice (Imelman, *ibid*.).

During her keynote presentation about Participatory Action Research, Abma (2018) referred to the problem of interference as follows:

> People involved have too little say, doing and thinking are parcelled out. There seems to be contemporary tendency to distinguish between doing the work by certain people and thinking about how the work should be done by others.

A similar trend, in which doing and thinking are separated, can be seen in the curricula of vocational education. Wheelahan (2015) argues that it is important to teach not only skills, but also to facilitate access to knowledge: knowledge is generated and used by people. For researchers, Procee (2011) situates the word *knower* as central, instead of *knowledge* and, following on from that point, 'to understand' is the most important verb instead of 'to know'.

To summarise, Biesta, Abma, Imelman, Wheelahan, and Procee informed my thinking, as working in every professional practice is about doing and thinking. Meijer (2013) adds to this for me, in that the search for how to do your professional practice 'good' is an inextricably linked question. The search for how to do 'good' is related to the values-based education that Biesta (2010) proposes, and he sees values as constitutive. Working from values is at the heart of Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1989) and this journal EJOLTS (www.ejolts.net). In this paper, I put my doing and thinking into words, and what values I have discovered from overseeing my professional life. In the following section, I begin with the methodology I used to ground my Living Educational Theory Research.

Methodology

Generally, in research, a methodology provides the rationale to understanding how the research was conducted (Whitehead, 2018). Bigger (2021) indicates a methodology of one's own is required in pursuing Living Educational Theory Research and creating a personal living-educational-theory. Characteristics of Living Educational Theory Research are the centrality of 'I' (Bigger, 2021) and 'improvement' (Whitehead, 1989). Therefore, I use action research cycles. Boog and Wagemakers (2014) use the explanation of McNiff and Whitehead to denote first person ('I') action research, which is research focused on one's own life with the aim of making conscious choices. It takes place in a social context; contact with others who advise on choices and ask critical questions is required (McNiff & Whitehead in Boog & Wagemakers, 2014). Boog and Wagemakers (2014) use Van Strien's regulative cycle to interpret the cyclical process of research and learning. The first phase is the analysis which, after validation with the social context, leads to a first diagnosis. Phase two is the design of a new practice. In my own living-educational-theory this is about putting my values into words. The last phase is actually the continuation after articulating my living-educational-theory , i.e.putting into practice, validating, evaluating and improving.

This article is structured in the following way:

1. My context: my professional life and current developments

2. Theory that informed my thinking

3. Values and how I learned from doing

4. Conclusion and the way forward

In the following section I describe my professional life so far and then in what way the contemporary era also influences my professional practice.

Professional Life

In 1999, I started my study to become a social worker. My first practical orientation for the purpose of this study was at a day-care centre for children with disabilities. It must have been one of my first professional experiences with others in less favourable circumstances. After graduating as a social worker, a journey from youth-care worker led me to work in 2009 in Special Education. Since then, I consider myself as a supporter of good education. When children have fewer privileges because of their home situations, teachers can make a huge difference (see for example Bors & Stevens, 2014). Recently by chance, I came across my 2013 farewell speech from Special Education. It was written about me that my central question is always: How can I give my work real substance in the interests of the learner? I was not aware that others were making these observations about me at the time. I realise now, these learners at risk have had my special interest since then and I have tried to optimise their learning environments.

Meanwhile, I finished two Master's degrees, Pedagogical and Educational Sciences. Because of changes in the Dutch special needs educational landscape, I started working as an educational psychologist in Secondary Vocational Education. I started to think differently about 'special' while I was doing my Master's, with the realisation that viewing others as a

human being first and foremost is important. Because my Master's thesis in Pedagogy made me enthusiastic about doing qualitative research, I wanted to use these research skills with students and their educators from the basic level of Secondary Vocational Education. Because options to do research were limited, in 2015 I applied for a position as teacher-educator at the University of Applied Sciences in Teacher Education, and combined this with research. I have found that doing Participatory Action Research suits me best, as it is about working together with the people the research concerns, with the aim of contributing to an improvement in their circumstances. In recent years, I have also become aware that the current era influences circumstances and views.

Current Era

Pedagogical privilege in a meritocracy

The Netherlands, like other countries, has a meritocratic ideal: there needs to be a shared explanation of meritocracy such that the capacities of someone should be decisive in any selection process and not their background (Van Zijl, 2016). De Beer (2016) mentions that a meritocratic society is considered important by many because of its objectives of equity and efficiency. Notten (2016) indicates that, ideally, this means that the role of parents no longer plays a strongly differentiating role in the opportunities that are given. However, it seems that the role and social-economic status of parents are still influential (Dronkers & Van de Werfhorst, 2016; Elshout, Tonkens & Swierstra, 2016; Notten, 2016). In my professional practice, I have often experienced that this is still influential, most recently with students at the basic level of Secondary Vocational Education. Often these young people do not have a network, including parents, with opportunities and adults available to them.

Stam (2018) conducted an ethnographic study with female students at the basic level of education in the Netherlands and used the work of Giddens to conclude that a large group of these students had a lack of resources. Giddens (in Stam, 2018) sees resources as the ability to make changes in the material and social context. According to Stam this can include access to teachers and control over what happens in the classroom. Within my professional practice, I do not want to assume that everyone has the ability to find and maintain resources, although ideally, this ability should be developed. When I relate resources to the role of parents (or other adults while growing up), I call this a 'pedagogical privilege', and this is when students have a network available with sufficient resources who provide them with encouragement and trust. Much research shows that relational bonding is important for everyone, perhaps particularly important for children who lack this pedagogical privilege to make the best use of their abilities.

Standardisation without context

What I want to say is that a meritocratic ideal is not enough. As adults, we might need to provide extra support for those who lack that pedagogical privilege. Often these children are more challenging to teach. In education, many instruments are used to determine whether a child meets the standard. Wienen (2019) explains that the biomedical model in inclusive education is dominant and that this model assumes underlying individual

problems. Meijer (2004) expressed his concerns about this psychiatrisation of education, and believes that the central question should be, 'what does the teacher need?' A diagnosis, for example, seems to be a goal in itself, instead of first asking, 'who is this child?', and 'what does this child need in order to flourish?', 'who am I?' and 'what is within my power to contribute to this?'

In the acknowledgements of his dissertation on inclusive education, Wienen (2019) coined his personal central question: "how can it be that we have come to regard children as sick?" In his letter to his children he explains his concerns about education: if you deviate too much from the norm, adults are increasingly quick to think that something is wrong (Wienen, 2019). Dehue (2014) indicates very clearly in her work that certain scientific research tends to shape reality rather than discover it. In relation to diagnosing mental disorders, Dehue uses the word 'reification'. Dehue gives the following example to explain this:

> ... a short body length we now call SBL and we tell them that they are so small because they have SBL, which is the cause of this defect. It then becomes hidden that we have declared the short body length to be abnormal ourselves. (Dehue, 2014, p. 21)

So, when the norm is tight, and we do not examine our own beliefs about the standard, we might fail to see that every child develops differently because of their background, genes, environment *et cetera*. The risk is to deprive them of opportunities by framing them as deviant too soon, or thinking too quickly that contributing to the solution lies outside their own sphere of influence, even though a child's actions may be undesirably deviant and have an impact on others. In the current era, there is a tendency to assume a norm and those who do not adhere to the norm are seen as deviant. This brief sketch of the era in which I work, shows how important it is to think about what has taken place, what effect it had and intended, before making changes with consequences for practice. As I pointed out in the Introduction, doing and thinking should be inseparable. In order to contribute to this important viewpoint, I would like to explain my thinking and doing, and what I have learned from it.

Theory that informed my Thinking

In this section I will describe what I have learned from theory in the past years. Although writing has a linear structure, the theory that informed my thinking is inseparable from doing. How I have learned from doing this and what values this has led to, are described in five parts, namely Socratic dialogues, my professional intention and human flourishing, Participatory Action Research, reflection on the intention, and Living Educational Theory.

Socratic dialogues

In the process of becoming a social worker (graduated in 2003), listening and detaching yourself from your own judgements is an important prerequisite. Working in Youth Care, I came in contact with the book of Martine Delfos (2009), *Ik heb ook wat te vertellen! Communiceren met pubers en adolescenten* ('Communicating with Teens and Adolescents'). Delfos writes that a genuine dialogue contains warmth, respect and interest

(2009, p. 125) and the conviction that the other person has something to share and wants to share this (Delfos, 2009, p. 121). Besides these principles, Delfos describes the features of a Socratic dialogue. To me, these are very significant:

1. Being convinced that the other is an expert about them self

2. Bringing out the other's expertise

3. Asking, rather than telling

4. Experience by doing

I have seen and experienced that this is not only effective for young people, but for everyone. Who does not want to be heard and have this agency? In the concept of human flourishing I have found a relation with my professional intention, or at least how I perceive this. In the next section I will discuss my professional intention and outline how the concept of human flourishing aligns.

My professional intention and human flourishing

Imelman (2017) states that every field of work has an intention, which should guide its actions in practice. This is his response to the politically-directed renewals in education. In 2008, the Lower House in the Netherlands admitted that renewals in education are often done thoughtlessly and hastily, but nothing has changed since then (Imelman, Wagenaar, & Meijer, 2017). Renewals should start from the intentions of the field of work. I see the work of Imelman (2017) as a plea to redistribute the power of how renewal should be done back to the ones involved. I will come back to the issue of 'power' related to 'whose voice' in the next section. First, I will examine what I see as the intention of my field of work, using the concept of human flourishing.

In my profession, the features of a Socratic dialogue are very helpful in *how* I do my work. These are excellent principles. The *what* of my professional intention emerged after reading Wolbert, De Ruyter and Van Schinkel's (2017) article, *'Formal criteria for the concept of human flourishing: The first step in defending flourishing as an ideal aim of education.'* As the title states, human flourishing is seen as an ideal aim of education (see for example Brighouse, 2006; Reiss & White, 2013; Nussbaum, 2010 in Wolbert, De Ruyter & Schinkel, 2015). Wolbert, De Ruyter and Schinkel described two criteria of human flourishing in education; first flourishing, which is about the actualisation of the human potential of students, and then what is intrinsically worthwhile for them. In this explanation, I see the intention of my work as a teacher-educator and a researcher. At the moment, I facilitate students 'enquiring capacities' through a thematic research-group, focused on the teacher as subject, i.e. 'how do I influence my learners' learning?' I make use of a Participatory Action Research methodology. This research-methodology also affects how I can best perform my job, in order to contribute to human flourishing. I elaborate on this in the following section.

Participatory Action Research

Action research can be defined as a joint research practice of researchers and researched, from the value orientation of a directly democratic society that is also socially just and sustainable. (Boog, 2003;2008;2011 in Boog & Wagemakers, 2014, p. 15)

This sentence indicates what Participatory Action Research is about. For me, it could end with: ' … and contributes to human flourishing'. In 2003, Boog gave an overview of its historical background and current state and concludes that a theoretical basis does not imply a successful research. An analysis of the specific context in the research-project is needed (Boog, 2003). McNiff (2014, p. 25) states the following questions should be asked in an action research project: 'Whose interest? Whose theory? Whose voice? Who says? Whose visions?'

Boog (2003, pp. 434–435) also adds the following criteria:

1. Researchers should have a sincere emancipatory intention

2. The project should be a mutual learning-process for researchers and researched

3. Interaction between researcher and researched forms the basis of quality of the new knowledge.

In these interactions, researchers should have more than just research skills (Boog & Wagemakers, 2014). In addition to research into technical knowledge, professional knowledge of the specific situation is required and the researcher should have social competences such as communication skills and (self-)reflective abilities (Boog & Wagemakers, 2014). As someone who started as a social worker, communication skills such as the Socratic dialogues, and the ability to reflect, are part of my toolbox. In the following section, I will explain how this is part of my professional 'doing and thinking' before I address Living Educational Theory Research.

Reflection on the intention
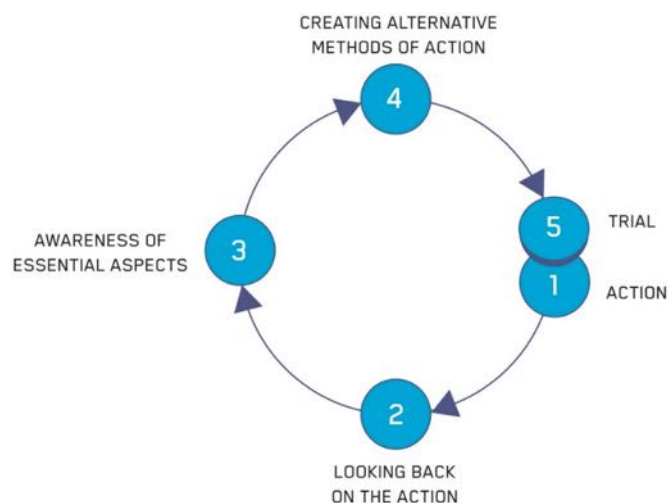
Figure 1. The ALACT model of reflection. (Korthagen, n.d.)

Although this model is helpful to improve one's own actions, I find the approach of Procee (2011) of added value. Aside from 'the self', Procee uses two further domains in reflection as part of a professional approach: left from 'the self' is 'the profession' and right from 'the self' is 'the wider environment'. This is based on a scheme of Barnett (Procee,

2011, p. 167). In this scheme, the depth of reflection is on the Y-axis and based on a threefold division Aristotle made 2,000 years ago. The first level is *Techne*, which means another creative way to tackle the problem. The second level is *Phronesis*, to evaluate if the chosen standards are right and if there could be other points of view. The third level, the deepest – or highest in this scheme – is *Episteme*, to take implicit points of view and prejudices into account. The level of *Episteme* particularly relates to the intention of the field of work, by using three domains instead of just the self. The scheme of Barnett as elaborated by Procee (2011, p. 67) looks as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Domains and Levels in a Professional Approach

Domains Levels	1: The profession	2:Self – personal-professional –	3: Wider Environment – social, political and environmental factors –
E: *Episteme* (philosophical) **Often implicit starting points and presuppositions are scrutinized which are assumed in a self-evident way**	What are the principles underlying the subject-specific approach?	From what fundamental human perspective do I operate?	Which vision on culture and society is leading/dominant in my profession?
P: *Phronesis* (interpretative) **Are the standards of success used right and would these not be different in the light of other people's considerations/theories/perceptions?**	What would the solution look like from other theoretical perspectives / approaches?	What perceptions do I have of my professional self and what perceptions do others have of my professional self?	How does my way of working affect various parties involved?
T: *Techne* (technical) **Tackling the problem creatively**	How do I solve problems within the profession as effectively as possible?	What skills to act as an effective professional do I require?	How can I communicate and implement effectively?

Scrutinising the self-evident in the three domains reminds me of research on organisational cultures. For many people, the intention of the work takes place in an organisational context. Schein (2004) uses three levels of cultures: 1) Artefacts, 2) Espoused beliefs and values and 3) Underlying assumptions. The underlying assumptions are considered to be the source of action and values. Values and action are at the heart of Living Educational Theory and this is what the final section is about.

Living Educational Theory Research

The section, 'Theory that informed my Thinking', so far has been about which theory enriches my understanding and action as a professional in the context where I work. In this section, I discuss Living Educational Theory:

> Whitehead (1989) coined the term living-educational-theories for a practitioner-researcher's valid, values-based explanation for their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations, created in the process of researching questions such as, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

In articulating my own living-educational-theory, my own values are important in the intention about how the work should be done. The website of the Journal of Living Educational Theories describes the position of values in the following way:

> At the heart of Living Educational Theory Research is the realisation in practice of humanitarian and life-enhancing values, which contribute to a world in which humanity can increasingly flourish. ([Commitment and scope | Educational Journal of Living Theories (ejolts.net)](ejolts.net))

Although Socratic dialogues, human flourishing, Participatory Action Research, and reflection on the intention are related to values, creating my own living-educational-theory requires me to make these explicit, so they can be used as explanatory principles. The difference with a process of self-reflection is what Procee (2011) also pointed out, but in a different way: it is not just about how I feel about having put this into practice. It is about learning if I have acted upon my values and, if needed, how to improve.

Living Educational Theory Research distinguishes two different values, relational and ontological (Mellett, 2020). It is not my intention to go into great detail about these differences, but it makes sense in my practice to distinguish them. First, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 'ontological' means, 'a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of existence'. The etymology is Greek: 'onto' means 'being' or 'that which is' and 'logia' means 'logical discourse'. I explain this as being the 'what' in my values. Relational – according to the same dictionary – means, 'existing or considered in relation to something else'. I explain this as the 'how' in my values. With the articulation of values, I will use Whitehead's (1989) explanation of Habermas' work, to validate values in relation to others. First, in addition to the understandable articulation of values, the word 'values' itself has the premise that the articulated values have truthful intentions. The way to act upon values is by communicating them to the other person, and to make sure that these are expressed in a way with respect to the other's background. It is and was important to have a dialogue about my intentions and so, in the next section, I will express the intention of my values and how they are perceived by others with whom I work.

Values and how I have learned from doing

I aligned the theories used in the previous section in my practice, and *vice versa*. My doing aligned with these theories. In this section I will elaborate on how my intentions and reflection are connected and then I will discuss the role of doing and dialogue. I use

examples from the past two years of my professional life as a teacher-educator and participatory action researcher.

Intention and reflection

Being a full-time practitioner in care, welfare and education since 2004, I implicitly knew my aim was to contribute to the well-being of others. Being a researcher, I know that participatory ways are the most effective in terms of facilitating change on behalf of the most vulnerable. Reflecting on these theories in practice, I have learned about my values.

Doing and dialogue

I have learned that it is not just about theory, the espoused values, but about putting the values into practice. To find out if I put these values into practice, I had dialogues with others – those to whose learning I could contribute – and asked what was valuable to them when I tried to practice these values. This is what Delong (2020) calls 'Using dialogue as research'. In line with my explanation of Habermas I would say my values are my intention and putting these into practice and asking genuinely how they are perceived means I am improving my learning.

Which values?

October 2020 25th I met Jackie Delong at one of the virtual workshops of the Collaborative Action Research Network. She offered (in line with her values) to help me with articulating my own living-educational-theory. For me it started with thinking about this theory. I shared some of the research I had done, which was working with teachers and career counsellors and students at the basic level of vocational education in the Netherlands. In preparation for a digital contribution to the Living Knowledge Festival in June 2020, I started to ask my co-researchers (teachers and career-counsellors) how my professional actions were perceived. I admit that it felt uncomfortable to ask. Maybe this is a characteristic of people from the North of the Netherlands. A well-known saying is, 'do not make yourself look better than you are'. Of course, my upbringing has also influenced me into believing It is better to give than to take.

However, in the event, it was very pleasant to hear how my actions were perceived after working together for a period of about two years. So, this was my starting point. In this process, I found that I did not feel comfortable asking for this kind of feedback from people with whom I am in a power relationship, such as students whom I have yet to assess. And I think it works the other way around as well: If I am too dependent on someone, it does not feel comfortable. Then I do not feel the freedom to have this dialogue. However, since May 2020, I have been taking stock of my values and how I put them into practice. First, I will express the ontological values, the 'what' and the feedback I got. Secondly, I will articulate the relational values and express if and how they are perceived.

My ontological values and perception by others

Give voice to those who are heard less – in order to contribute to social justice! I see this value as a common thread in my work. I would like to share an example where I worked with teachers and career counselors in order to give voice to vulnerable students in order to

help them prepare for their future after graduation. Here is an example in this digital contribution to the Living Knowledge Festival (Bijker, 2021):

Video 1. See and feel the meaning of dialogues for a vulnerable group of students (F053A) - YouTube 3 min 10- 3 min 51 by F. Bijker (2021)

One of the compliments I received, unexpectedly, from one of the students in one of the dialogues we held was when I asked him how well he felt prepared for the future after his graduation, he said[1]:

> Student: Well, to be honest, a lot better. [Femke: Yes? Well, that's good to hear.] Student: Yes, I think you are doing a good job. [Femke: Yes, well, how nice to hear!] Student: Certainly. (Dialogue with student, May 17, 2019).

These are the important moments to me, when I feel I am making a contribution to someone's flourishing, someone who might need it more than someone who already had a lot of opportunities or privileges.

Another example of when I contributed to give voice, was during a teaching visit to one of the students in teacher-training assigned to me. After they finished this part of training, I asked the following *via* a short questionnaire: 'In what way did the class visit and the conversation(s) contribute to your learning as a trainee teacher? Can you give an example?' One student responded:

> The lesson visit gave me effective and clear feedback/feedforward that I could actually use. For example, the feedback focused on how to better connect with the student population. The feedback really 'opened my eyes' and that means that I now deal with it more consciously during my lessons and the preparation thereof. (Response of a student in questionnaire, June 16, 2021)

In this way, I contributed to the voice of 'less heard' students, by questioning the student in teacher-training on her intentions and if she knew whether she was fulfilling that intention. This example is a clear bridge to my intention to bring out the other's expertise.

Bringing out the other's expertise

Working with the Socratic Dialogues and being a participatory action researcher and teacher-educator, I realised 'Bring out the other's expertise' is one of my values. In the thematic research group 'The teacher as a subject: How can I influence my learners?' I asked the three students who passed, if they thought I had done this. The response of one of the students was:

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[1] quotations of students and colleagues have been translated from Dutch to English

…Yes, I think so. It's precisely because of that feedback, that you just… So it wasn't like what I had was rejected or something. But it was more like: Yes, this is a start, but go on now. Which meant that I either did more research, or started thinking about my own values. In my opinion, that is completely different in terms of content than when you make a report for another course. Then it's just like, this is not what you should be doing, so do it differently. Or, this satisfies the assessment form so, done! So yes, absolutely, I learned a lot more from it, also about myself. (Dialogue with student Christel, January 31, 2022)

In her response, she acknowledges my way of encouraging her to recognise her own knowledge and values and to continue the work of unveiling that knowledge.

Sharing my expertise - when applicable

Another feature of the Socratic Dialogue as described by Delfos (2009) is, 'Rather ask than tell'. To me, this should be put into practice when I work from the value of 'bringing out the other's expertise'. However, in dialogue with a colleague, with whom I am in the process of becoming a registered teacher-educator, we came to the conclusion I have some expertise and he is eager to learn from that. So, this makes 'sharing my expertise' a valid explanatory principle for me.

I asked this colleague to reflect on this and he said:

There are many roads that lead to Rome. The Socratic dialogues 'road' is a nice solid way to transfer knowledge. However, when there is little time and knowledge about a certain subject, concrete pragmatic knowledge transfer can be more efficient and effective.

When this came up during the Velon registration [professional registrar for teacher-educators], you sensed this and suggested to adjust the way of transferring knowledge. I experienced this as very pleasant and valuable. (Response of colleague Roy, e-mail, March 11, 2022)

Reflection on the ontological values

When I connect the three ontological values in the context of my professional practice to the experiences and theory of others, they relate to what Campbell (2018, p. 46) says about Whitehead's work:

[…] ideas are not imposed upon the learner [the other]; the learner's [the other's] valued lived experiences enable them to internalise theories from disciplines and make new meaning, personal meaning, of theoretical ideas.

I relate to Campbell's (2018) experiences of working from values when she shares her experience that students unravel their knowledge and relate their experiences to their values

In the next section I will discuss my relational values, which for me are more about 'how' I bring my intentions to practice.

My relational values and perception by others

To work on the ontological forms of values, I make use of the following relational values. In relation to others, these values have been known to me for a long time. I have discovered this by reflection in my previous training and work. The values also emerged when I asked students (who had passed the course) what they had valued, and in the feedback I received in an e-mail.

Let me first define my relational values according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, put in an 'I aim' form:

> Helpful: I aim to improve a particular situation... in order to contribute to human flourishing

> Careful: I aim to give attention or thought to what I am doing... in order to contribute to human flourishing

> Trustworthy: I aim to be reliable in being good, honest, sincere...in order to contribute to human flourishing

For example, when I was talking to students about the evaluation, Patrick said:

> In any case, I look back on it with a really good feeling. And that also includes things like...that you say: 'Oh, wait a minute, I have an article about that, I have a good book about that'. And then immediately the links, the books and things. Those are really valuable moments that make me think. Now my teacher is really helping me and she's really helping me further. (Dialogue with student Patrick, January 31, 2022)

When I returned to Jeroen after finishing his research, he told me by e-mail:

> On a personal note, I very much appreciate the fact that you have taken the trouble to provide such extensive feedback at this stage as well. This makes me feel very good again [...] Thank you! (Dialogue with student Jeroen, March 10, 2022)

The question at the heart of Living Educational Theory Research is: How can I improve my learning. In the last part I will elaborate on this.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Way Forward

Writing this paper has helped me to express my intention, to articulate my values and to reflect on these values. I used the theory of academics, my experiences in practice and the perceptions of others. I realise that I have been working from values – particularly the ontological – unconsciously for years. Now, however, I have made the ontological values explicit and asked how they are perceived in order to validate them. This has helped me to determine what I find important in my professional life and made me even more conscious about my choices, and how and what work I can do best. It has helped me to divide the values into ontological and relational ones. Although they are interwoven, the relational seems supportive to the ontological in my professional life.

For me, 'thinking' (referring to theory) and 'doing' (new experiences) are interwoven. I am grateful for the opportunity in my professional life to become a participatory action researcher and have access to many adequate sources of theory ('thinking' of academics)

that I have been able to learn from. I am also grateful because I have encountered many people with different backgrounds who have helped me to learn, and I have had the opportunity to work in contexts in which I can contribute to human flourishing. I consider these as privileges in my professional practice.

Despite these privileges, thinking, reflecting and articulating my values have helped me to realise that my values are not the same as everyone else's. One issue, for example, is deciding the most appropriate way of conducting research in the Social Sciences, because it means working *with* people when they are affected. As most participatory action researchers will likely know, this research methodology has not been embraced everywhere. Realising such differences, brings me to the work of Schein (2004) on organisational cultures, and of Marsick and Watkins (2003) on organisational learning. Schein (2004) indicates that there are underlying assumptions in organisational cultures, so there could be a difference between the expressed intentions and the espoused. One of the dimensions of a learning-organisation examined by Marsick and Watkins (2003), is to, 'empower people toward a collective vision'.

I believe that in my professional practice, dialogues about the intention of our field of practice should be held more often. I hope my articulated ontological values contribute to the collective intention of good (teacher-) education and research in the Social Sciences. An important question that remains open is, what exactly I can contribute from my (different) roles and positions to the collective vision in the (power) structures of the environments I work in. For example, I have made a small contribution to the content of the curriculum, by being enabled to organise and facilitate thematic research groups for students in teacher-education. These focus on the teacher as subject, and how I can influence my learners' learning.

However, this theme still depends on my effort. As an employee in (teacher-) education and research, I experience the biggest influence I have to be on an interpersonal level. As a result of this paper, my intention on this interpersonal level is to have dialogues about the intention of our field of practice more often, while remaining open to the expertise and experience of others. I hope that through these dialogues I can contribute to the intention, vision and related structures of the environments where I work. Whether I will be able to make a contribution that does not solely depend on me, is an interesting question for the continuation of my self-study. Intention and reflection, doing and dialogue. To be continued!

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