



Volume 15(1), 43-66.
www.ejolts.net
ISSN 2009-1788

A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry: an approach to professional development

Jacqueline Delong

Jacqueline Delong

Canada

ORCID ID

[https://orcid.org/
0000-0002-2408-0143](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2408-0143)

Copyright: © 2022 Delong.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

In this paper I share my vision of professional development based on my experience and research over a 40-year career in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Ontario, Canada and in the last 5 years as an international mentor of graduate and post-graduate practitioner-researchers. I begin with my socio-historical-cultural context as a teacher and system leader in a 30,000-student school district in Ontario, Canada where I encouraged and supported teacher-research as professional development. I describe and explain how this approach to professional development using Living Educational Theory Research has evolved through my writings over 25 years. Finally, I advocate for the creation of living-educational-theories in Cultures of Inquiry, using dialogue as a research method with visual data for improving professional development for the future and for the flourishing of humanity.

Keywords: Living Educational Theory; Culture of Inquiry; Practitioner Research; Professional Development.

Introduction

In this article, I argue that each living-educational-theory contributes to the improvement of the self, others, and the social formations in which we live and work and to human flourishing. It is my argument that not only is the Living Educational Theory research-process (Whitehead, 1983) a most professional form of professional development, but it also is a means to move from knowledge-inquiry to wisdom-inquiry (Maxwell, 2021), and to mitigate the negative inequities and influences in the world. The current context concerns global changes in the recognition of the importance of continuing professional development, and can be understood through the numerous presentations on Living Educational Theory Research in professional development that are accessible from the [What's New](#) page of Whitehead's website (<https://actionresearch.net/>) a repository of living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1995-2022).

By its nature, an approach to professional development through Living Educational Theory Research generates explanations of educational influence in learning, and recognises and confirms – through the use of self and peer-assessment in validation groups – individual ways of knowing and embodied knowledge. It is essential to make public the embodied knowledge of practitioners and to evolve the knowledge that is made public in the course of its emergence through practice. The concept of a Culture of Inquiry was the result of my doctoral research (Delong, 2002) and, since that time, has evolved based on research on its efficacy with its latest amendments being the inclusion of Eastern Wisdom Traditions (Delong *et al.*, 2022). A slide (Figure 1) from my presentation at the AERA 2022 Annual Meeting shows the evolving nature of the elements of a Culture of Inquiry:

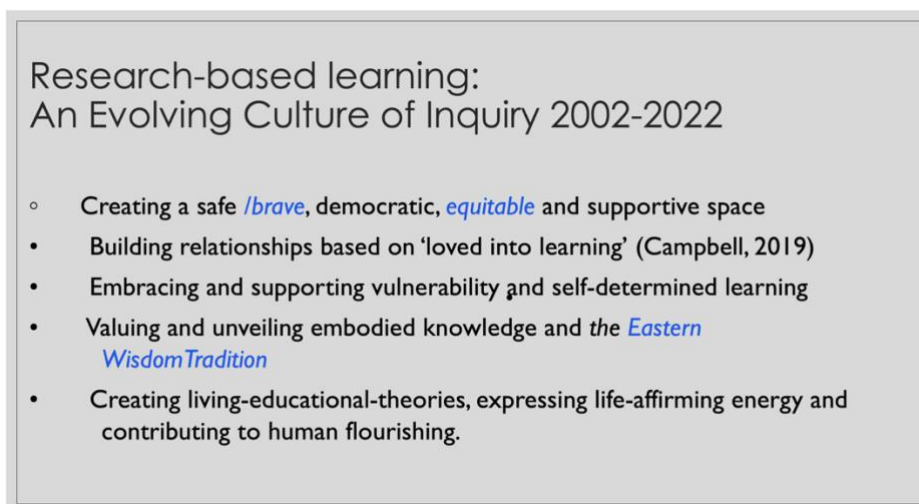


Figure 1. Evolving nature of a Culture of Inquiry (Delong, 2022).

(I wish to thank my reviewers and colleagues for helping me to strengthen this article; it is much stronger, more coherent and communicates more clearly than its earlier versions.)

The article is framed with the following headings:

1. Purpose

2. Socio-historical-cultural context
3. Methods and Data Sources
4. Findings: A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development
5. Results
6. Significance
7. Looking ahead

Purpose

My purpose in this article is to share the research that I have conducted over several decades on my practice as I have encouraged and supported practitioners, mostly teachers but also other professionals, to create their own living-educational-theories as a means to improve their lives and their practice. While I have reflected and written on the topic for many years, I feel an educational responsibility to explicitly define an approach of a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry to improving our practice. I use the word 'approach' to professional development as opposed to a 'model' deliberately because I do not wish to frame it as inflexible or closed. Living Educational Theory Research, Cultures of Inquiry, and this approach to professional development, have evolved over the years and will continue to be refined by those practitioners conducting the research as, "a way of living/life" (Griffin & Delong, 2021, p. 1). In fact, I invite you to modify the approach to meet your own needs.

Socio-Historical-Cultural Context

One of the features of primary and secondary education in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, has been the strength of the teacher unions. The effect of this power is that most decisions about education have been made in partnership, although currently, with more imposed decisions by the government, are full of tension, conflict and sometimes the withdrawal of work. Having been a governor of the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation District and President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, I can share that the union is tenacious in its protection of teachers, their workload, benefits, and pensions. It offers first-rate professional development and, at the time when I was involved, that included supports for teachers in Action Research.

One of the fights that the unions lost was the Ontario College of Teachers (OCE). Established in 1997, judged by Ontario teacher unions as a 'top-down' mechanism to limit teacher and union autonomy under the veil of professionalism' (MacLellan, 2014, p. 67), OCE was:

legislated to regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members, develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the College, to accredit professional teacher education programs and ongoing education programs and to set standards. (Ontario College of Teachers)

Despite the concerns of teacher unions, OCE has served as a structure that contributes significantly to teachers' professionalism. In recent years, there has been some incursion by the current provincial government in reducing the size, power, and democratic nature of the college.

The Ontario Education Act prescribes that the school year calendar may include up to nine days for professional development (and usually does), and the Ontario Ministry of Education, school districts, and teacher unions all provide funds for teachers' professional activities. Ontario teachers are highly educated and accredited. While students are tested provincially, the results are not used for student grades and generally not for the purposes of school funding.

It was in this context that I, as a superintendent of education for 13 years, introduced the Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development, building it from a small group of seven teachers and school administrators to a critical mass of teacher-researchers across the system (Delong, 2002). We created eight volumes of "Passion in Professional Practice" (Delong *et al.*, 2001–2008), which was the repository of the classroom research. I invited teachers to create their own living-educational-theories and to personalize their own learning as professional development, not through my or anyone else's agenda. This model of professional growth links research and practice and leads to substantive change where we, "both explore and theorise practice" (McAteer, 2013, p. 13). Bev McDonald, one of the early adopters in the Brant Country Board of Education, wrote that she had 'grown as a professional', and that:

I have had the opportunity to reflect and review Literacy in the Primary Grades and to implement a very exciting literacy program in my classroom. Throughout the whole process, I have felt in complete control of all aspects, along with my two colleagues. (Halsall & Hossack, 1996, p. 24)

As a university adjunct professor, I organized and taught this process for accreditation at Master's level for cohorts of educators in several school districts (Delong, 2002). Subsequent to that, I was a consultant with another school district to support the implementation of a Living Educational Theory Research approach as professional development (Griffin, 2011; Campbell, 2011, 2019). For the past five years, I have mentored graduate and postgraduate practitioner-researchers around the world to create their own living-educational-theories in global cultures of inquiry, and to publish their results.

Methods and Data Sources

In this paper, I draw on my own research and publications on my own practice over 25 years on an approach of Living Education Theory in Cultures of Inquiry to professional development – some of which are referenced in this article – and those of other practitioners with whom I have collaborated (for example, Griffin & Delong, 2021; Vaughan & Delong, 2019, Whitehead & Delong, 2011). In particular, I bring examples from our AERA 2021 and 2022 communities (Delong, *et al.*, 2021; 2022) in which we have researched our practice as individuals and as a culture of inquiry. I have implemented and researched this approach to Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry in terms of improving self and

practice in many different contexts, and I am consistently asking how I might improve my support for practitioners creating their own living-educational-theories. From my own practice and experience, and drawing on the research, writing and theses of others, I present a framework for Professional Development.

In all of the papers and presentations referenced in this article, the methods I use include:

- empathetic resonance (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2010; DeLong, 2010)
- dialogue as method (DeLong, 2020) and digital visual data to clarify the meanings of the energy-flowing values of democracy, vulnerability and loved into learning (DeLong, *et al.*, 2021; Campbell, 2011);
- validation groups to enhance the comprehensibility, evidence, normative understandings and authenticity (Habermas, 1976) of the claims to educational knowledge.
- action-reflection cycles to improve our practice and the co-creation of educational knowledge.

While I have shared these methods in other publications, at this point I will give an example of what I mean by *empathetic resonance*:



Video 1. Empathetic Resonance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z00ZE1C74II> (DeLong, 2019)

In the video clip, Michelle Vaughan says that she imagines me, "like a fairy godmother with all these lives that you are touching". Here is my reaction! If you put your cursor on the red line of the clip and just move it back and forth, I think you can see the life-affirming energy in both of us in the process called, 'empathetic resonance (DeLong *et al.*, 2013, p. 79). Herein is the value in using technology and digital data in educational conversations as a research method, in order to share our meanings that text alone cannot convey. (DeLong, 2020, p. 10)

Insights are drawn from *Living Educational Theory Research* (Whitehead, 2019) and *Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry* (DeLong, 2002; 2021) to explain how our community of practice fulfils our educational responsibility to improve our educational practices and to contribute to the global knowledgebase of education. I draw insights also from Whitehead and Huxtable (2016):

grounded in the idea of enhancing professionalism in education through recognizing and accrediting accounts of living-educational-theories as knowledge generated by professional practitioners as Master and Doctor Educators (p. 1).

The data sources include over 50 Living Educational Theory masters and doctoral theses (accessed from <https://actionresearch.net/>) that have been awarded at Universities around the world, eight volumes of *Passion in Professional Practice* (Delong, et al., 2001–2007) and 11 years of publications in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs). I refer you to the freely available issues of EJOLTs, where you will find living-educational-theories from around the globe.

I draw on the research of our AERA 2021 community members (Dhungana, 2020; Vaughan, 2019; Mishra, 2021; Whitehead, 2019) as they contribute their data from their sites of practice, from digital visual data and from field-based Participatory Action Research projects to provide evidence of the creation of educational knowledge and the professionalism of teachers associated with a community of Living Educational Theory researchers.

Support is a critical component in learning and growth, and includes opportunities to have dialogue, cultures of inquiry, critical friends, and guidance from mentors (Delong, 2021):

Engaging in dialogue also calls for participants to develop a sense of mutual respect towards one another and developing an awareness of one's own and one another's fragility is paramount. (Glenn, 2021, p. 20)

My international mentoring contributes to the Living Educational Theory social movement and focuses on informal research, on Master's and Doctoral theses as professional development. This also fulfils my educational responsibilities as a global citizen (Potts, Coombs & Whitehead, 2013), and citizen scholar (Vaughan & Delong, 2019; Harper et al., 2021) as I work with others in international education.

Next, I focus on our global culture of inquiry in preparation for presentation of a symposium to AERA 2021 as an example of Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry as part of our professional development.

Global teacher professional development and intercultural education

In my intercultural, global cultures of inquiry, I am inspired by Fulbright:

The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy — the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see... (Fulbright 2022-23).

In this section, I provide an evidence-based explanation of how a community of practitioner-researchers with an international mentor, is creating educational knowledge within and between the different cultural contexts of Nepal, India, USA, Canada and the UK to create their contributions to a Culture of Inquiry (Delong, 2020) as they create their own living-educational-theories. In each of our contexts we are conducting self-studies, asking,

'How can I improve my teaching practice?' and creating our living-educational-theories using our values as standards of judgment. We explain our educational influence on ourselves, others and the social formations where we live and work. We are therefore using the approach of Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry as our professional development. As professional educators, we explain the meanings of the relational values used by practitioner-researchers as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning with the values of the flourishing of humanity. Our living-educational-theories are contributing to a global social movement for the creation of a future with life-affirming, energy-flowing values of human flourishing that mitigate and overcome the alienating power of inequities and oppression.

One of our community's sessions was our Symposium Presentations at the 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) on Accepting Responsibility with Jack Whitehead (UK), Shivani Mishra (India), Michelle Vaughan (USA), Parbati Dhungana (Nepal) and myself (Canada) (DeLong *et al.*, 2021).



Figure 2. Our AERA 2021 Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry as professional Development. (Clockwise from top left: DeLong, Whitehead, Mishra, Vaughan, Dhungana (Whitehead, 2021)

Each of the practitioner-researchers shares in their papers how they are using this approach to professional development and contributing to a global social movement for the creation of a future with life-affirming, energy-flowing values of human flourishing that mitigate and overcome the alienating power of inequities and oppression. This is an example of using dialogue as a research-method (DeLong, 2020).

Mishra: The results include evidence of learning from a 72-hour programme of training in life skills education to understand and to teach it. The results include an evidence-based explanation of how I link my practice with theory and theory with practice. They include an explanation of my learning how to take risk and realising how risk-taking is an important aspect of creative thinking in the generation of a living-educational-theory. (p. 6)

Vaughan: Evidence is provided from a longitudinal analysis of student evaluation comments and critical conversations with students and mentors, to clarify and validate core values of connection, vulnerability and caring as well as discovering living contradictions. Materials from Action Research cycles are provided to create safe places where others can embark on

this journey and experience the sense of wholeness and peace that comes with aligning practice to values in a living-educational theory. (p. 8)

Dhungana: A joyful environment is advocated as a contextual need in university classes, a support for mutuality and an antidote to measureability. Aesthetics, a synergetic process, and aesthetic-based inquiry are shown to be useful in educational inquiries into complex contexts. Taking educational responsibility is joyful when we continuously live our values influencing self, other and the social formation (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41) with the aim of fulfilling the common good of citizen-scholars. (p. 10)

Whitehead: The results include the generation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge, fulfilling Schon's (1995) call for a new epistemology. They include the explication of a Living Educational Theory Research approach for making public the embodied knowledge of professional practitioners and developing educational forms of evaluation and accountability in complex ecologies. This is consistent with Snow's (2001) call to make public the practical knowledge of educators.

In this next section, I delineate what I propose for an approach to professional development for the future by creating one's own living-educational-theory in a culture of inquiry.

Findings: A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development

Jack Whitehead and I recorded a dialogue on this model for professional development using Living Educational Theory Research in cultures of inquiry. It is a more concise version of the Eleven Points that follow:



Video 2. Jackie Delong and Jack Whitehead dialogue on A Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXgMTZO4Nys> (Whitehead, 2021)

In the introduction to this video at 00:19 to 1:34, Jack Whitehead says the following:

This approach is a form of professional practitioner self-study research which generates valid accounts of your values-based explanation of your educational influence in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations. An author's life-affirming and life-enhancing values as you live and work recognizing resolving contradictions as far as you can, need to be explicit.

Framing a Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development

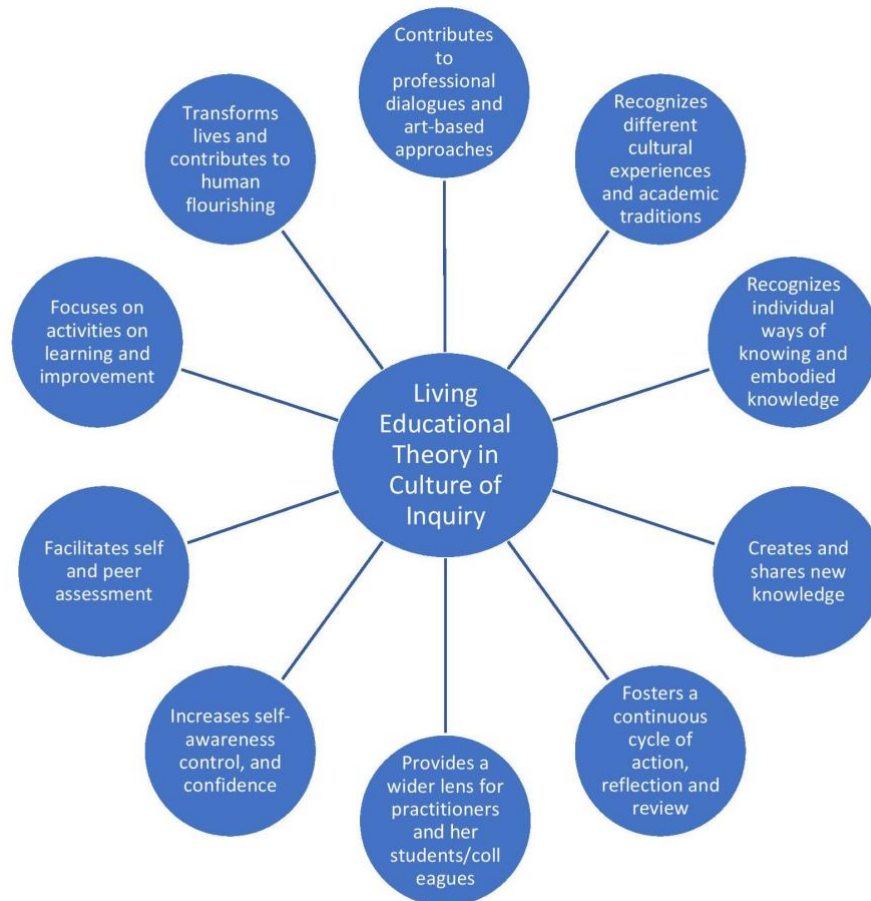


Figure 3: Summary of the approach of Living Educational Theory in Culture of Inquiry for Professional Development (DeLong, 2022a).

Living Educational Theory Research is a form of professional practitioner, self-study research, which generates valid accounts of their values-based, "explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others, and the learning of social formations" (Whitehead, 1983). It is expected that the research will explicitly explain the form of logic, epistemology, standards of judgement and units of appraisal – all necessary to generate a living-educational-theory, while asking the question, 'How can I improve my practice?'. "The intrinsic values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing help to distinguish what counts as educational" (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016, p. 8) needs to be explicit. Huxtable's (2016) article, 'Integrating personal, political, and professional educational practice that gives meaning and purpose to my life and work', provides support for this approach.

In the next part of this article, I provide an extensive list of 11 aspects of Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry as Professional Development. I make observations

on the aspects based on 25 years of implementing this approach to Professional Development. The aspects are neither sequential nor hierarchical. Suresh Nanwani responded to this article:

I absolutely agree with Jackie on her approaches, specifically cultures of inquiry approach. This is pivotal for human flourishing as this works both ways – students and teacher – and both benefit with a win-win solution when there’s a real connection where barriers fall down (email, June 13, 2022).

When supports are in place in a Culture of Inquiry (DeLong, 2002), creating one’s own living-educational-theory as an approach to professional development does the following:

Focuses activities on learning and improvement

The focus on improvement can be seen in the grounding question of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development: ‘How can I improve what I am doing?’ The practitioner-researcher focuses her attention, actions and collection of data on how to get better at a particular aspect of her work. She tries to restrict her focus to a sufficiently small area so that the project is practicable and recognizes the constraints of working and researching at the same time.

The focus on learning can be seen in the knowledge generated in a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development. The knowledge is generated and shared as an individual’s explanation of their educational influences in their own learning in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding. Evidence for this knowledge-generation with a focus on learning and improvement can be accessed in over 50 Living Educational Theory doctorates from Jack Whitehead’s website (<https://actionresearch.net/>).

Facilitates self and peer assessment

In Living Educational Theory Research, there is a concern with enhancing the validity of the researcher’s explanation of educational influences in learning, through self and peer assessments that focus on the mutual rational control of critical discussion (Popper, 1975, p. 44). Self-assessment is a necessary part of an evidence-based claim to have improved practice and student learning. However, judgments of self may be influenced by bias and error. This is where the support of a Culture of Inquiry comes into play: it is important to supplement self-assessment with peer assessment in validation groups of between 3–8 peers that enhance the validity of evidence-based explanations through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. In Living Educational Theory Research, validation groups help to strengthen the validity of the self-assessment explanation by responding to questions (Habermas, 1976, pp. 1–2) such as:

- How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my claims to knowledge in my explanations?
- How can I deepen and extend my sociocultural and sociohistorical understandings in my explanations of educational influences in learning?

- How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanations in the sense of showing that I am living my values as fully as possible?

With the 'I' at the centre of the research, the investigation is a self-study. However, we rely on others to hold us accountable for our claims to know. In order to avoid "smooth stories of self" (MacLure, 1995), we engage others to hold us accountable for our claims to know, to have lived according to our values and to have improved. Some researchers also focus on ensuring the rigour as well as the validity of their research. For example, [Peggy Kok \(1991\)](#) applied Winter's six criteria of rigour of dialectical and reflexive critique, risk, plural structure, multiple resource, and the transformation of theory into practice, to her research.

Increases the sense of self-awareness, control, and confidence

A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to continuing professional development, increases the sense of self-awareness, control and confidence. Evidence to support these claims can be accessed as follows:

Self-awareness – The explanations of educational influences in learning that can be accessed freely from the over [50 Living Educational Theory](#) doctorates and masters dissertations that Jack Whitehead has supported, and the [informal research](#) in the Grand Erie District Board that I have supported, all demonstrate an increase in self-awareness in learning to live the values of human flourishing as fully as possible. Self-awareness is increased in the recognition of the need to recognize the biases and errors in one's own self-assessments, and how peer-assessment can help to overcome such biases and errors through the exercise of the mutual, rational control of critical discussions in validation groups (Popper, 1975, p. 44).

Control – To have control over one's own professional development increases confidence and professionalism. The practitioner-researcher is the person best placed to determine where she needs to act to improve her teaching practice. The process of this determination is important for the long-term commitment to the research process. Only through feeling an internal need to improve will the commitment be realized. The use of the methods of Living Educational Theory Research, such as action-reflection cycles, digital, visual data, dialogue as method, and living-posters, emphasise the importance of enhancing control over oneself and one's own research in improving practice and generating and sharing the knowledge one is generating (DeLong, *et al.*, 2021 & 2022).

The experience of the practicing teachers is that they felt in control of the whole process and felt trusted.

Confidence – The practitioner-researchers who use a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry for continuing professional development, enhance their confidence as they present at local, national and international conferences, and see their work appearing in research journals (Campbell, 2019; Qutoshi 2016). The risk for the school-district is that, once teachers recognize and have confidence in their embodied knowledge, they will be reluctant to give the control of their learning and improvement back to the school and system leaders.

Provides a different and wider lens for the practitioner and her students/colleagues

Explaining educational influences in learning, while taking account of sociocultural and sociohistorical influences, requires an engagement with different and wider lenses for understanding the self and the social formations that influence practice and understanding. Creating one's own living-educational-theory is even more exciting when the teacher and students become co-researchers and peer-assessors. Having responsibility for one's own learning and living according to one's own values is a life skill for improving our lives, the world around us and contributing to the flourishing of humanity.

A different and wider lens in Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry for professional development, has been explored in a [2022 Symposium](#) at the American Educational Research Association, with a focus on equity. The different and wider lens includes insights from an Eastern Wisdom Tradition and a Western, Academic Critical Theory Tradition (Delong, *et al.*, 2022).

Fosters a continuous cycle of action, reflection and review

Action-reflection cycles are a distinguishing feature of a Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development (Eames, 1987). This involves a continuing process of:

- expressing concerns when values are not being lived fully
- imagining improvements and choosing an action plan to act on
- acting and gathering data on which to make a judgement on the effectiveness of actions in terms of improving practice and living values as fully as possible
- evaluating the effective of actions in improving practice; modifying concerns, plans and actions in the light of the evaluations.

(see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arlivingtheoryplanner.pdf>)

Once we start down this path of taking action, reflecting on its effectiveness, reviewing the next action, it becomes a way of life, a process of continuous reflection and assessment. Whitehead (1994) proposed a new curriculum for the curriculum for teacher-education using this approach:

How Teacher-Researchers are Creating a New Form of Educational Knowledge

ABSTRACT

A new form of knowledge proposed for a teacher education curriculum is dialogical and grounded in an educational researcher's experience of existing as a living contradiction within the politics of truth of a university. It includes a systematic form of action-reflection cycle and depends for its generalisability on teacher researchers producing descriptions and explanations of their own educational development (their living-educational-theories) as they explore questions of the improvement of the quality of student learning. These educational theories are considered in Part One. Part Two describes an action research and educational theory case-study based on the professional educational knowledge of competent teachers. It is argued that a teacher education curriculum for novice teachers should be related to the educational theories of competent teachers. This is shown in action

in the educational theory of a university tutor in an educative relationship with a novice teacher as she forms an educational inquiry, defines her values, and is encouraged to gather evidence on the quality of her pupils' learning. Part Three draws the implications of a living educational theory for a teacher-education curriculum and relates it to a practical science 'model' and a common-sense 'model' of teacher education. (p.1)

Creates and shares new knowledge

A Living Educational Theory Research approach to continuing professional development includes two related strands – improving practice and generating and sharing knowledge. Hence it includes a focus on creating and sharing new knowledge. As long as knowledge is seen as theoretical and emerges from academics in universities where the gatekeepers reside and control, the knowledge of the practitioner will not be available for the improvement of education and learning. The teacher and the students in the classroom are the experts on where improvement needs to occur and what actions need to be taken to effect that change. When they research and share their own learning and teaching, they contribute to the knowledge-base of teaching, learning and assessment of the real world, and the practice of education.

Recognizes and confirms individual ways of knowing and embodied knowledge

For much of the life of the academy, research has been confined by quantitative, statistical, and propositional ways of knowing. More recently, intuitive, artistic, and women's ways of knowing have been more widely accepted and promoted. In addition, teachers and students have been seen as consumers and adopters of the ideas of others, rather than the creators of knowledge. This restrictive view of education promoted the consumption model with limited inquiry-based learning and access to the embodied knowledge of practitioner-researchers of all ages.

The archive of Living Educational Theory doctorates at Jack Whitehead's website contains the evidence of individual ways of knowing, and embodied knowledge has been recognized and confirmed through the examining systems of universities around the world.

Strengthens the voice of the practitioner and the student

For the most part, 'talking at' has been the professional development way of conducting in-service training. This method rarely works in terms of transforming practice so that learning is enhanced. The intended transfer from theory into practice does not occur because the learner, practitioner or student is not engaged, the learning is not personalized and the commitment to change is not aroused. For learning to improve, for knowledge to be created, the practitioners' and students' voices must be raised, listened to, and acted on.

Gaining academic recognition for embodied knowledge and making it public strengthens the voice of the practitioner. In generating a valid, evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning, practitioners respond to their students' responses and include these in their explanations of educational influences in learning.

Evidence that the voices of practitioners and their students have been strengthened – through a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to

professional development – has been made public in the Educational Journal of Living Theories and in the Master's units and dissertations of practitioner-researchers. In particular this evidence can be accessed in an article by Bognar and Zovko (2008), 'Pupils as action researchers: improving something important in our lives', and in a Master's unit by Mounter (2008), 'Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?'

Recognizes different cultural experiences and academic traditions

In contributing to enhancing the global educational influence of a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development, it is essential to recognise, respect and, where necessary, to challenge or question cultural differences. Without this recognition, respect or questioning, it is likely that an individual practitioner from one culture might be in danger of behaving in a colonizing way in another. This is a particular danger in which practitioner-researchers like myself have been culturally influenced by Western Academic Traditions. I have found it necessary to question these traditions as I have engaged with Eastern epistemologies and insights from Africa on Ubuntu, and Hawaii on Aloha, and insights from indigenous forms of knowledge. I feel very connected to the work of Suresh Nanwani (2022a; 2022b):

Human Connections is about the author's integrative journey of teaching experiences in China and beyond, focusing on two central questions: *What matters most?* and *How to improve?* The author's narrative to answering these questions is expressed in dynamic values acquired through learning and teaching episodes. Organization Development (OD) theories from a western outlook including Appreciative Inquiry and Living, along with ikigai, yoga, meditation, and tai chi from an eastern perspective, are examined holistically to provide insights into meaningful relationships between teacher and students. (Nanwani, 2022b, p. 12)

The Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry approach focuses on values-based research. Because we share so many common values and understandings, it opens the door to sharing different cultural experiences and inter-cultural education. Access to the internet has meant that we can meet our fellow practitioner-researchers creating their own living-educational-theories to share our concerns, provide encouragement, support, and resources any time, given the time differences. We learn about other ways of seeing the world and how we can help each other improve it.

Evidence for the recognition of different cultural experiences and academic traditions in a Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to professional development can be accessed in the presentations on enhancing equity in networks of education in the 2022 Symposium at AERA (Delong, *et al.*, 2022). In the 2022 papers, you will see that, within our Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry, we have deliberately worked to integrate Eastern Wisdom Traditions and Western Critical Academic Traditions so that all voices are valued and heard:

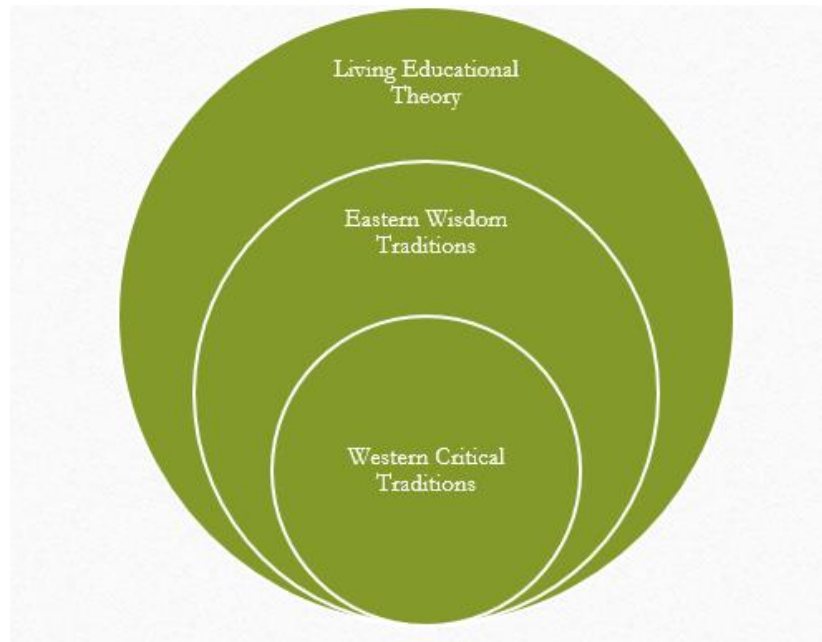


Figure 4: Living Educational Theory Cultures of Inquiry integrate Eastern Wisdom Traditions and Western Critical Traditions (Dhungana, 2022).

In the course of our 'dialogue as method' research (DeLong, 2020), we addressed feelings of colonization and the dominance of the English language and deliberately worked to address these inequalities as well as those in each of our contexts. This work continues.

Contributes to professional dialogue and arts-based approaches

By its nature, a Living Educational Theory Research Culture of Inquiry approach to continuing professional development contributes to professional dialogue and professional development. Professional dialogues are necessary in cultures of inquiry and validation groups to help to strengthen the validity and objectivity of an evidence-based explanation of educational influences in learning. The approach is focused on an understanding of professional development that includes both improving professional practice and generating and sharing a contribution to the professional knowledge-base of education.

A significant source of data in creating one's own living-educational-theory is through dialogue as research method (DeLong, 2020). Educational conversations collected in video recordings and stored on YouTube (with a transcription available) provide data to support or challenge one's claims to know. With journals like *EJOLTs* where visual data stored in various media is valued, educational conversations bring clear evidence of life-affirming energy and energy-flowing values that are difficult to explain through text alone. Alternative forms of data representation are essential to the explication of values such as 'loved into learning' (Campbell, 2019) as they often defy lexical definitions. A valid living-educational-theory provides clear evidence of educational improvement in one's capacities to teach better, learn better, be better.

The most recent evidence that justifies the claim that in the approach of Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry in professional development contributes to professional dialogue and arts-based approaches, is presented in Merna Meyer's (2019)

Educational Journal of Living Theories 15(1), 43-66, [_____](#)

doctorate 'Becoming participatory artists, researchers and teachers: my living theory of Art Education', which was legitimated at North West University, South Africa in 2019.

Transforms lives and contributes to human flourishing

A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry approach to continuing professional development transforms lives with its focus on living as fully as possible the values of human flourishing. This focus on the values of human flourishing is not only expressed in improving practice, but is also included in the values-based explanations of educational influence in learning with human flourishing. It becomes "a way of living/life" (Griffin & Delong, 2021, p. 1).

Within Living Educational Theory research, it is common for the practitioner-researcher to share that creating her own living-educational-theory was transformative. Knowing that one is living according to one's own values, or a living contradiction, is a life-affirming process that builds your own confidence in your place in the world and in improving it.

Part of this transformation is in extending one's global understanding of what it means to be a professional educator who is engaged with learning to contribute as a global citizen to overcoming the world crises. Brown (2021), working with teams of researchers, states that as global citizens we are faced with seven major global problems we must address: global health; climate change and environmental damage; nuclear proliferation; global financial instability; the humanitarian crisis and global poverty; the barriers to education and opportunity; and global inequality and its biggest manifestation, global tax havens. Living Educational Theory researchers acknowledge that these problems influence what we are doing and that:

Each one presents an immense challenge that requires an urgent global response and solution. All should be on the world's agenda today. None can be solved by one nation acting on its own, but all can be addressed if we work together as a global community. (Brown, 2021)

Maxwell (2021) lists the world crises in a way similar to Brown while distinguishing between knowledge-inquiry and wisdom-inquiry in the two great problems in learning. He believes that the first, knowledge-inquiry, has been successful in learning about the universe, and about ourselves and other forms of life as a part of the universe. Knowledge-inquiry, however, has failed to learn how to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world, so he offers wisdom-inquiry as a way of solving the second great problem of learning.

The question to ask, research, and answer as part of our continuing professional development and wisdom inquiry as global citizens is, 'How are we providing mutual support to ourselves and others in living our co-operative values as fully as possible in contributing to systemic educational changes?' In this inquiry with its cultural grounding, insights can be drawn from Santos (2014) in doing what we can to both avoid 'epistemicide' and to ensure that the voices of those who are being denied a voice, are heard.

The most recent evidence, that justifies the claim that an approach to professional development using Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry can transform

lives and contribute to human flourishing, can be accessed in the two AERA Symposia for 2021 and 2022 that focus on the values of educational responsibility and enhancing equity in systems of education (DeLong, et al., 2021, 2022).

Results

The results include evidence that the community of mentor and mentees' co-learning (Nyanjom, 2020) in Living Educational Theory cultures of inquiry has influenced the creation of knowledge and the spreading educational influence of these global cultures of inquiry with practitioner-researchers. The results have emerged from the educational inquiries of researchers who have used technology, such as video-conferencing platforms like Skype, Teams and Zoom to their advantage, to live the values of human flourishing for a better future.

Engaging in Living Educational Theory Research provides the process for better knowing yourself, your values, and for knowing if you are living according to those values or if you are a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41). This approach to professional development guides you to live that sense of joy and satisfaction as a life-long process of commitment to improving yourself and the world around you. Here is what Michelle Vaughan says about creating her own living-educational-theory:

I found I could not do this work alone, and through the mentorship I received from those within this field, I was encouraged to talk about my work, share my thinking and expose my core. While initially uncomfortable, once I started, I found that I could not stop. Like a good book, I would share my story with anyone who would listen, making new pathways for this energy to travel. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 76)

It is an expectation of Living Educational Theory Research to make public the practical 'embodied' knowledge (Hocking *et al.*, 2001, xviii) that is being expressed in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41). Through the use of action-reflection cycles we engage in a systematic inquiry into improving our practice and into making public an explanation of our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of social formations. Using values as standards of judgment and explanatory principles, we deepen and extend our explanations of educational influence in our own learning and in the learning of others. This involves a growing understanding of the nature of the educational knowledge that is created in justifying claims to know one's own educational influences in learning.

It is important to emphasize the significance of working within a culture of inquiry in a community of other practitioner-researchers that supports Living Educational Theory Research. A culture of inquiry is a safe, supportive space, in which practitioner-researchers are enabled to share their vulnerabilities, to make explicit their values, and to hold themselves accountable for living according to those values (DeLong, 2020). They learn to recognize when they are not living according to their espoused values and are what Whitehead (1989, p. 41) calls 'living contradictions'.

Focusing our educational responsibilities in generating, sustaining and developing Cultures of Inquiry for Living Educational Theory Research with the values of human

flourishing, I accept what Maxwell (2021) refers to as the two great problems in learning: the first problem, learning about the universe, about ourselves and other forms of life as a part of the universe. Maxwell refers to this as knowledge-inquiry. We can see the successes of science and technology in knowledge-inquiry. However, I agree with Maxwell that knowledge-inquiry has failed in contributing to the second great problem of learning, focused on how to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world.

A wise world would encourage and support teachers' professionalism through a Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry approach and contribute to resolving this second problem with what Maxwell refers to as wisdom-inquiry. Included within my explanation are my values of being a citizen-scholar and exercising my educational responsibilities, is the recognition that my unique constellation of values is relationally dynamic. Hence my use of these values as explanatory principles, means that my explanatory principles are relationally dynamic. Based on the results of this research, I advocate for the creation of living-educational-theories in cultures of inquiry using dialogue as a research-method with visual data, and for intercultural education for improving teacher professionalism for the future and for human flourishing.

Significance

The significance of this research is in the values-based explanation of how the Living Educational Theory cultures of inquiry are spreading the educational influences in learning of practitioner-researchers through their professional teaching roles. It is significant as well that the research explains our educational influence, as our living-educational-theories are contributing to a global, social movement for the creation of a future with life-affirming, energy-flowing values of human flourishing, that mitigate and overcome the alienating power of inequities, violence and negative forces.

The most power and significance in learning to create their own living-educational-theory resides in the practitioner-researchers finding confidence in their own 'I' and recognizing their embodied knowledge.

When I use 'I', I am not referring to an egotistical 'I'. I am referring to the relational 'I' of infinite conversation, described by Buber (1970). (Whitehead, in Bradbury, 2015, p. 246)

The risk for a school or university system is that once the teachers find their own voices, have control over their own learning, exert, "creative compliance" (MacDonald, 1987, p. 5) and take responsibility for their own professionalism, challenging the inequitable power structures that exist in our places of practice (Wood *et al.*, 2019), they will not willingly give that power back and accede to 'power over'.

If you, like me have questioned the meaning and purpose of your existence, I think you will experience hope and fulfillment in creating and sharing your living-educational-theories as we all seek to improve what we are doing in contributing to a flow of values and understandings of human flourishing. I hope, dear reader, that you will engage with my research and provide some input on how I might strengthen it, so that we can all be "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2019) in a loving and supportive Culture of Inquiry.

Looking Ahead

Going forward, my intentions are to improve my understanding of Eastern Wisdom Traditions, their languages, concepts and images, and be more vigilant about the impositional, colonizing nature of the Western Critical Tradition and the English language as I mentor practitioner-researchers to create their living-educational-theories in Cultures of Inquiry. I plan to find ways to mitigate "epistemicide" (Santos, 2014) in other ways of knowing, and continue to research my practice for its improvement as well as mentoring others to do the same. At the time of writing, I am creating proposals with the members from AERA 2022 for the CARN 2022 Conference in Dublin, Ireland, which is taking place on 28–30 October, and for AERA in 2023.

I continue to invite you and others to join our Living Educational Theory cultures of inquiry to improve our professional practice in our local contexts around the globe, and to contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

References

- Bognar, B., & Zovko, M. (2008). Pupils as action researchers: improving something important in our lives. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 1(1), 1 – 49. Retrieved June 22, 2022, from <https://ejolts.net/node/82>.
- Brown, G. (2021). *Seven Ways to Change the World: How To Fix The Most Pressing Problems We Face*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Campbell, E. (2011). Journey to the otherway: How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully? (M.Ed. dissertation, Brock University, Canada.) Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/index.asp?pageid=255602>
- Campbell, E. (2019). How has love influenced me as a teacher researcher, and learner? A narrative inquiry into a teacher's abrupt awakenings? (Ph.D. thesis, Nipissing University, Canada.) Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/campbellphd/campbellphd2018.pdf>.
- Delong, J. (Ed.) (2001-2007). *Passion in Professional Practice; Action research in Grand Erie*. Brantford; Grand Erie District School Board. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ActionResearch/passion/index.html>
- Delong, J. (2002). *How can I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools and create my own living-educational-theory?* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Bath.) Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <http://www.actionresearch.net/delong.shtml>
- Delong, J. (2010). Understanding complex ecologies in a changing world: Engaging educators in representing their knowledge in complex ecologies and cultures of inquiry. AERA 2010 Conference Denver, Colorado. Retrieved April 12, 2022, from <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/index.asp?pageid=225581>
- Delong, J. (2019). Video 1: Empathetic Resonance.

- Delong, J. (2020). Raising Voices Using Dialogue as a Research Method for Creating living-educational-theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 13(2), 71-92. Retrieved June 22, 2022, from <https://ejolts.net/files/4Jackie367.pdf>
- Delong, J. (2021). Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a Canadian/global context. Paper presented to the 2021 Virtual Conference of the American Educational Research Association. Retrieved from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/jackie.pdf> (Powerpoint slides to support the presentation can be accessed at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/jackie.pptx>)
- Delong, J. (2022). Figure 1: Graphic of Evolving Nature of a Culture of Inquiry.
- Delong, J. (2022a). Figure 3: Graphic of Living Educational Theory in Culture of Inquiry approach to Professional Development.
- Delong, J. & Whitehead, J. (2011) Transforming educational knowledge through making explicit the embodied knowledge of educators for the public good. Paper presented at the 2011 American Educational Research Association Conference in New Orleans, USA, April 9, 2011. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED518585.pdf>
- Delong, J., Whitehead, J., Mishra, S. & Vaughan, M. (2021). Symposium presented at the 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in global contexts. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>
- Delong, J., Whitehead, J., Dhungana, P., Vaughan, M. & Rawal, S. (2022). Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century in global contexts through Living Educational Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry. Symposium at the April 2022 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century, in San Diego, California. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/AERA2022sessionprop.pdf>.
- Dhungana, P. (2020). 'Living love': My living-educational-theory. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 13(1), pp. 45-70. Retrieved from <https://ejolts.net/node/356>
- Dhungana, P. (2022). Figure 4: Living Educational Theory Cultures of Inquiry integrate Eastern Wisdom Traditions and Western Critical Traditions.
- Eames, K. (1987). The Growth of a Teacher-Researcher's Attempt to Understand Writing, Redrafting, Learning and Autonomy in the Examination Years. (M. Phil. dissertation, University of Bath).
- Fulbright, J.W. (2022-2023). Fellowships for Indian Citizens. Retrieved from https://www.usief.org.in/upload/ip2022-23/2022-2023_Fulbright_Brochure.pdf.
- Glenn, M. (2021). Extending knowledge by developing a 'slow approach' to action research. *Educational Action Research*. Available from DOI: [10.1080/09650792.2021.1948434](https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2021.1948434)

- Griffin, C. (2011). How can I improve my Practice by Living my Values of Love, Trust and Authenticity more fully? (M.Ed. dissertation, Brock University, Canada.) Retrieved from <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3.spanglefish.com/s/11596/documents/bluewatermrp/griffin%20mrp%202.pdf>.
- Griffin, C. & Delong, J. (2021). As Educators and Educational Researchers. What Contribution Has a Living Educational Theory Approach Made to Helping Us to Improve the Quality of Our Practice and Our Lives? *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 14(1), 26-49.
- Habermas, J. (1976). *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. London: Heinemann.
- Halsall, N. & Hossack, L. (Eds.) (1996). *Act, Reflect, Revise: Revitalize: moving beyond problem-solving to renewal*. Mississauga: OPSTF, pp. 15-17.
- Harper, S. R., Davis, L. P., Jenkins, T. S & Soodjinda, D. (2020). *Accepting Educational Responsibility*. AERA 2021 Annual Meeting Theme. Retrieved from <https://www.aera.net/Events-Meetings/Annual-Meeting/2021-Annual-Meeting-Theme>.
- HCPC (2016). *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*. London: Health and Care Professions Council.
- Hocking, B., Haskell, J., & Linds, W. (Eds.) (2001). *Unfolding Bodymind: Exploring Possibility Through Education*. Rutland: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Huxtable, M. (2016). Integrating personal, political, and professional educational practice that gives meaning and purpose to my life and work. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 9(2), 1-23. Retrieved from <https://ejolts.net/files/284.pdf>.
- Kok, P. (1991). Rigour in an Action Research Account. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/peggyrigour.pdf>.
- MacDonald, B. (1987). Record of the First C.A.R.E. Conference The Ides of March to consider 'The State of Education Today'. Centre for Applied Research in Education: University of East Anglia.
- MacLellan, D. (2009). Neoliberalism and Ontario Teachers' Unions: A 'Not-So' Common Sense Revolution, *Socialist Studies/La Societie D'Etudes Socialistes*, 5(10). Retrieved https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299545625_Neoliberalism_and_Ontario_Teachers%27_Unions_A_Not-So_Common_Sense_Revolution.
- MacLure, M. (1996). Telling Transitions: boundary work in narratives of becoming an action researcher. *British Educational Research Journal*, 22(3), 273-286.
- Maxwell, N. (2021). *The World in Crisis – and what to do about it: A revolution for thought and action*. London: World Scientific.
- McAteer, M. (2013). *Action Research in Education*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd..
- Mishra, S. (2021). *Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a Canadian/global context*. Paper presented to the 2021 Virtual Conference of the American Educational Research Association.

- Mounter, J. (2008). Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory? Masters Unit - Understanding Learning and Learners assignment. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>.
- Myer, M. (2019). Becoming participatory artists, researchers, and teachers: my living theory of Art Education. (Ph.D. thesis, North-West University). Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/meyerphd2019.pdf>.
- Nanwani, S. (2022a). *Organization and Education Development: Reflecting and Transforming in a Self-Discovery Journey*, Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge. Retrieved June 18, 2022, from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-mono/10.4324/9781003166986/organization-education-development-suresh-nanwani> (Open Access).
- Nanwani, S. (2022b). *Human Connections: Teaching Experiences in Chongqing, China and Beyond*, at https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09ZJ5RY36/ref=docs-os-doi_0 (Kindle Edition, 2022).
- Nyanjom, J. (2020). Calling to mentor: the search for mentor identity through the development of mentor competency. *Educational Action Research*, 28(2), 242-257.
- Ontario College of Teachers (2022). Site available at, <https://www.oct.ca/about-the-college/what-we-do/objects>.
- Popper, K. (1975). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchison & Co..
- Potts, M., Coombs, S. & Whitehead, J. (2013). Developing Cultural Empathy and The Living Global Citizenship Agenda: The Social Role and Impact of Technology in Supporting Global Partnerships. Presentation at the 2013 Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association University of Sussex, September 5th. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera13/markstevejackbera010913.pdf>.
- Qutoshi, S. B. (2016). *Creating Living-Educational-Theory: A Journey Towards Transformative Teacher Education in Pakistan*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Kathmandu, Nepal.) Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/sadruddin.shtml>.
- Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. London: Paradigm Publishers.
- Vaughan, M. (2019). Learning who I am: The exploration of my guiding values through a Living Theory methodology. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(1), 62-80. Retrieved from <http://ejolts.net/node/336>.
- Vaughan, M. & Delong, J. (2019). Cultures of Inquiry: A transformative method of creating living-theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 19(2), 65-88.
- Whitehead, J. (1983). The Use of Personal Educational Theories in In-Service Education. *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 9(3), 174-177. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0305763830090307?needAccess=true>.

- Whitehead, J. (1989). Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1), 41–52.
- Whitehead, J. (1994). How Teacher-Researchers are Creating a New Form of Educational Knowledge. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the 1994 American Educational Research Association. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwaera1994.pdf>.
- Whitehead J. (2015). The Practice of Helping Students Find Their First Person Voice in Creating Living Theories for Education. In Bradbury, H. (Ed.) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research* (3rd Ed.). London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 246–54.
- Whitehead, J. (2019). Creating a living-educational-theory from questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?' 30 years on with Living Theory research. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(2): 1-19. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwejolts2019.pdf>.
- Whitehead, (2021). Video 2: Jackie DeLong's and Jack Whitehead's dialogue on a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXgMTZO4Nys>.
- Whitehead, J. (2022). Figure 2: Graphic of AERA 2021 Living Educational Theory in Cultures of Inquiry as Professional Development.
- Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2010). How are we sustaining educational relationships to improve educational practices with teachers and pupils in the generation of educational knowledge? Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Warwick, September 1-4, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmh2010.pdf>.
- Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2016). Creating a Profession of Educators with the living-theories of Master and Doctor Educators, *Gifted Education International*, 32(1), 6-25. Retrieved from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei2015/jwmh.pdf>.
- Wood, L., McAteer, M. & Whitehead, J. (2019). How are action researchers contributing to knowledge democracy? A global perspective. *Educational Action Research*, 27(1), 7-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1531044>.