

***Book Review: Delong, J. & Whitehead, J. (2023) You and Your Living-Educational Theory: How to conduct a values-based inquiry for human flourishing. Routledge.***

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Jack Whitehead is the originator of Living Educational Theory Research and Jacqueline Delong's doctoral supervisor. Since Delong completed her doctorate in 2002 they have been research colleagues. In this book we are given the opportunity to learn about Whitehead's seminal work through the lens of Delong's 'cultures of inquiry'. A culture of inquiry is a non-hierarchical, democratic space that encourages everyone to voice their thoughts (Delong, 2002).

The book is divided into four sections, where the ideas become more complex and are explored to give explanation in greater detail in each section. Parts One and Two are aimed toward beginner researchers and those doing research for a Master's degree, while Part Three focuses on doctoral studies. Part Four outlines how the authors themselves are engaging with their educational responsibility as global citizens. The book indicates that the reader might learn how to conduct Living Educational Theory Research through leafing through this book. However, this is not just a 'how to' book. It is an in-depth study on how Living Educational Theory Research can become a transformative movement contributing to the flourishing of humanity. As one reads through the book, it is clear that Delong and Whitehead are not simply showing the reader how to conduct research – they show that they live the underpinning principles of Living Educational Theory Research in their own lives and encourage readers to do likewise.

The book is aimed at practitioners who want to research their own practice but the text seems to address professional educators more specifically. From the outset, readers are invited to ask themselves, as practitioners, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Drawing on Whitehead's seminal work in 1989, potential researchers are invited to engage in a systematic inquiry into improving their practice and making public a valid explanation for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations, which form the context of the practice.

There are clear and helpful guidelines throughout the book for beginner researchers. Data collection, for example, is critically examined from Part 1 and revisited again in later stages of the book, becoming more complex and rigorous as the process is strengthened in each section. The authors give details of a validation process, which is an important aspect of all stages of the research process. Researchers are encouraged to share their research drafts with their critical friends and validation group from the earliest stages of the research. The book is enriched with multitudinous examples. Some of these are in the form of extracts and examples from the authors' previous writings; some are from the writings of students, while others are from professional practitioners' publications and presentations. Many include links to video data. These extracts and links form much of the evidence that support the authors' claims throughout the book.

The authors encourage readers to generate accounts of their own living-educational-theory and, drawing on the work of Dadd and Hart (2001), present their living-educational-theory research methodology. The reader is left in no doubt that Living Educational Theory Research is not just about improving an aspect of one's practice with values of human flourishing but that it is equally about contributing to developing a fairer and more just world. Love as a value and a basis for educational research is innovative and is introduced in the opening pages of the book. Delong explains how she 'loves people into learning'. Whitehead explains how he based his ideas around love on Cho's understanding of love as the 'pursuit of real knowledge, knowledge that is no longer limited to a particular content ... but rather knowledge that can only be attained by each partner seeking it in the world (Cho, 2005)' (p. 159).

A distinctive feature of this book is its emphasis on values of human flourishing. Values are perceived as dynamic forces that not only inform the researcher's practice but which, through dialogue and reflection, can help improve practice, strengthen and validate the research and have an influence in the world in which they live. Articulating, describing, examining and clarifying one's values in the research process is one the key themes that permeate all four sections of the book. As the ideas around the clarification of the values, which form the practitioners explanatory principles in valid explanations for their educational influences in their own leaning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations are explored in each section of the book, they form an increasingly more complex spiral of complexity as the book progresses.

The fourth part of the book sets a different tone to the first three sections. It forefronts the authors' own thoughts around their experiences of Living Educational Theory Research and is more reflective. Part Four captures the challenges and vulnerabilities the authors encounter in the field as well as the hope for a better world that inspires them. It draws on the authors' previous work, as well as the work of those who have engaged in Living Educational Theory Research, to support and provide evidence of their efforts to

spread the word.

While the idea of educational responsibility is introduced in the earlier sections of the book, Part Four is entitled *Living our Educational Responsibilities as Global Citizens* and ideas around educational responsibility are explored in depth here. The authors clarify that they are addressing their educational responsibility “towards the other, rather than for the other’ and see it as being expressed in educational relationships” (p. 158). They acknowledge that their ideas are continuously developing, and growing as they themselves learn and ask “what does taking responsibility mean?” (p. 163).

The authors develop the idea of Living Educational Theory Research as a global movement. They suggest that in developing a Living Educational Theory Research approach for global citizenship, it is necessary for “practitioner-researchers to imagine the future and to project themselves into its creation with others” (p. 161). Delong and Whitehead reflect on their work creating cultures of inquiry around the globe with colleagues, emphasise their ethical approach and show how they actively work towards avoiding colonising the thinking of others as they engage with co-learning with them. Suresh Nanwani’s references in *Human Connections: Teaching experiences in Chongqing, China and Beyond* to his teaching in a cohort of students at undergraduate level in a foreign land imbibing situations such as language, food, and other lifestyles underscore the need for a culture of inquiry to bring out the best for all, teacher and students, in human flourishing.

In this book, Delong and Whitehead have managed to present a convincing case that Living Educational Theory Research is not only an innovative way of doing research, but that it is also one of the ways that peace and social justice can be introduced into our troubled world. They have shown an important way of learning about the world that is also an innovative and powerful way of making impactful change in the world. This book is an inspirational source for educators and students to engage in Living Educational Theory Research to realise their responsibilities as professional practitioners and global citizens.

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