

PhD Review: Dr. Joy Mounter's PhD Thesis, 'A Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Continuing Professional Development in Education'.

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I begin my review by asking you to read Joy Mounter's abstract to her thesis, in which Joy outlines her original contribution to Living Educational Theory Research with her idea of Living Professionalism. Joy's Living Educational Theory Research is amongst the most sustained inquiries on an individual's professional development using a Living Educational Theory approach and also making an original contribution to knowledge of Living Educational Theory Research. The originality will be of use to all practitioner-researchers who are engaged with enhancing their educational influences in the learning of social formations:

My research and thesis contribute to the field of the continuing professional development of educational practitioners. The originality of my thesis proposes Living Professionalism as a new professional, values-led Teacher Standard of professionalism, where educational practitioners accept educational responsibility for their own continuing, values-led, professional development. This includes teachers continually researching their practice to improve it, generating values-laden explanations of their educational influence in learning, contributing to the growth of a global educational knowledgebase.

I draw on a Living Educational Theory Research methodological approach to continuing professional development in education. My thesis includes evidence of my reflections on the educational influences I have in my own learning, the learning of others and cross social formations, as I accept educational responsibility for my Living Professionalism. I have critically engaged and analysed literature on Living Educational Theory Research,

which revealed a limitation in the explanations of educational influences in learning across social formations. My explanatory principle of ~i~we~l~us~ relationships is proposed to highlight and transcend this weakness.

As part of values-led continuing professional development within Living Professionalism, and to overcome the identified limitation in Living Educational Theory Research, two new Living Educational Theory Research Master's degrees, have been validated during this research. These enable a given curriculum supporting educational practitioners to create their own living curriculum using Spirals and Living Interactive Posters as research methods, which have emerged in my Living Educational Theory Research.

An illustrative representation of the relational dynamic between my original contributions within Living Professionalism is offered as my Keystone Diagram, holding the practitioner and values-led practice at the centre. In the process of my research, I have clarified my living values, drawing on these as my explanatory principles and standards, by which I judge improvement in my practice, and evaluate the validity of my contributions to knowledge.

Using a Living Educational Theory Research approach to one's professional development can take place over months and years rather than hours or days. The evidence-based analyses below, from Joy Mounter's professional development have taken place over more than 19 years of her Living Educational Theory Research approach to her professional learning. Joy's original contribution to Living Educational Theory Research, did not emerge fully formed. It emerged from Joy's research into her professional development in her masters programme. This culminated in her dissertation as a Headteacher Researcher with an evidence-based demonstration of her impact and self-understandings. The Data and Analyses below, begins with Mounter's first Educational Enquiry Unit in 2006, on her Masters Programme at the University of Bath. It continues in two further Educational Enquiry Units, a Research Methods Unit, an Understanding Learners and Learning Unit and a Gifted and Talented Unit. It includes Mounter's Masters' dissertation (Mounter, 2012), on her professional learning as a headteacher. The analysis moves onto Mounter's doctorate, successfully completed in 2024. The University of Cumbria awarded Mounter a PhD for her thesis, '*A Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development*', as making an original contribution to knowledge.

First Educational Enquiry Unit, How can I live my personal theory of education in the classroom to promote self reflection as a learner? November, 2006.

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounteree.htm>

Through this account of my enquiry I want to explore my educational theories, how they influence my teaching and how I can share this and inspire the children in my class to be self-reflective learners... I agree with Morse (1992) that

'...theories are not fact. They are not the truth. They are tools. They are merely abstractions, conjectures, and organisations of reality, and as such, are malleable, changeable, and modifiable'.

... My concern initially was the difficulty of collecting data to demonstrate change, but through the action research model I will tape and video discussions of the children and myself and look at evidence from their writing reflecting on themselves

as learners. There are critics of action research methodology but Rose & Grosvenor (2001) suggest:

...that action research is the antithesis of a scientific approach, gathers strength from its focus upon specific situations and events, and its ability to examine the atypical and unrepresentative occurrences which are present in an individual situation.

...I am interested in the work of Bassey, (1991) who states 'It is creating education by challenging and developing one's own personal theories of education – by asking 'how do I improve my practice? And 'how do I help you improve your learning?' This supports and verifies the validity of my research question.

Second Educational Enquiry Unit, Language of learning to the language of educational responsibility. November, 2006.

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymountereee207.pdf>

How do I recognise the move from the language of learning to the language of educational responsibility?

...each practitioner researcher clarifies, in the course of their emergence, in the practice of educational enquiry, the embodied ontological values to which they hold themselves accountable in their professional practice. (Whitehead, 2005)

...As educational researchers we need to go beyond the language of learning into a language of educational responsibility; a responsibility to ourselves and the children, looking at educational explanations and evaluations of our living values in our class. This essay will move from the language of learning to clarifying the meaning of the educational responsibility I feel towards the children in my care.

Research Methods in Education Unit. If I want the children in my class to extend their thinking and develop their own values and learning theories, how can I show the development of their learning? How do I research this in my classroom? (2007)

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterrme07.pdf>

In my previous essays I have explored my living educational values and how I feel a tension between those values I hold dear and the ability to put them into practise in my classroom... Through the process of Action Research I have clarified and refined my own living values and the ability to articulate them and change them into actions. This assignment will closely examine the research methods I have used to reflect on the space I have created to encourage the children in my class not only to grow within the space of my 'educational values' but to explore their own and formulate their own theories for learning in the 21st century...

My journey has explored the development of self and understanding of learning skills for life, of the children in my care, whilst trying to fulfil the requirements of meeting the needs of the individual child.

Third Educational Enquiry Unit. 'How can I enhance the educational influence of my pupils in their own learning, that of other pupils, myself and the school?' 2008

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounteree3.pdf>

The children in my class and I have travelled far on our shared journey of self-reflection and learning. But we are interested to explore our understanding and ability to create knowledge, the space where this happens and our awareness of this. I am interested in learning, reflective practice and philosophical creation, thinking, the understanding that we all create and explore with our curiosity...

This assignment will build on my previous work (Mounter 2007), enabling the reader to share the journey we have undertaken and feel the change in language, beliefs and living values. Whitehead (2005) summarises this journey of exploration and development of one's own embodied ontological values which we hold ourselves accountable to. We move through our journey from teacher and pupil, filling the vessel with knowledge, through the self-awareness and awakening as a learner, understanding the roles and changeability of teacher/ learner/ coach/ mentor/ co-creator.

Understanding Learning and Learners Unit. Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory? 2008

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>

It's simple, I love teaching. I am still excited by the possibilities and the children I teach, their way of thinking and expressing themselves. I am writing this as a teacher-researcher who wants to contribute to educational knowledge. I write as someone with a passion for learning and the opportunity to experiment with new ideas. Someone keen to take a risk and share the journey and learning with the wonderful and curious children in my class. I am finding that a form of narrative enquiry in which I generate my own living educational theory of educational influences in learning is appropriate for presenting my account of understanding learners and learning (McNiff, 2007).

My journey of hope and change began with the arrival of 'Excellence and Enjoyment' (DFES, 2003). For the first time I felt we had the opportunity to take the curriculum and review it with flexibility and enthusiasm. I remember reading the first page and introduction by Charles Clarke and reading it a second time, just to make sure I had understood the meaning correctly:

'There will be different ways. Children learn better when they are excited and engaged... different schools go about this in different ways.' (DFES, 2003, p. 3)

For the first time since the rigidity of the Literacy Hour I felt we had hope to really make changes that would matter and have an impact. To develop creativity, flexible ways of thinking and learning.

MA Dissertation: As a Headteacher Researcher how can I demonstrate the impact and self-understandings drawn from Living Theory Action Research, as a form of Continual Professional Development in education? December 2012

<https://actionresearch.net/writings/module/joymounterma.pdf>

Abstract

Through the reflective gathering of my thoughts I have tried to show the layers of my journey and understandings, including staff learning, Loving Recognition and Nurturing Responsiveness, holding a 'learning space' within, and creative connectivity. As a female Headteacher and Headteacher Researcher I read with interest the writing of Bateson (1989), discussing the impact of female researchers in a predominantly male Academy of work:

Instead of concentration on a transcendent ideal, sustained attention to diversity and interdependence may offer a different clarity of vision, one that is sensitive to ecological complexity, to the multiple rather than the singular. Perhaps we can discern in women honouring multiple commitments a new level of productivity and new possibilities of learning. (Bateson, 1989, p. 166)

I hope the layers of my learning journey are reflected clearly through the narrative form of presentation used to carefully reflect the steps taken and the emotional understandings felt. As Bateson highlights, I hope it offers a different understanding of the validity and role this form of research has and the impact on professional development and CPD.

PhD Thesis, 2024 A Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Continuing Professional Development in Education.

<https://www.actionresearch.net/living/2024MounterPhd.pdf>

This review began with the Abstract of Joy's doctoral thesis.

The reason I want to highlight Joy's writings is because of her sustained commitment and perseverance in living her values of human flourishing as fully as possible and for her sustained research into a Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development. Joy's professional practice includes the generation and sharing of her explanations of educational influence in her own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning across the social formations within which her practice is located. We each have a unique constellation of values of human flourishing that we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives. Living Educational Theory Research enables us to generate and share the valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations of our professional lives and educational influences in ways that can be helpful to others, to do so too. In the creation of your own living-educational-theory I believe that you will be able to draw insights from Joy's writings in a way that will help you to live your own values for the flourishing of humanity, as fully as possible.