

**How do I contribute to enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for humanity in personal, professional, local and global contexts and generate educational knowledge?**

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I have spent much of my professional life in education as an educational action researcher contributing to educational knowledge through the generation of testing of living educational theories. I take a living educational theory to be an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work and research. At the heart of these explanations are the values-laden practical principles that an individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their life. These explanatory principles become the standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of an individual's knowledge-claim in their living educational theories.

My professional contexts continue to focus on enhancing professionalism in education through contributing to the knowledge-base of education. My local contexts are focused on providing support for action research around Bath and Liverpool, for improving practice and generating knowledge. My global context is related to my Chairing the Education and Learning Virtual Networking Stream of the 2010 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Action Learning Action Research Association in fulfilling my brief to:

*"...facilitate a global dialogue to explore the foundations, current applications and future hybridisations of Action Research and Action Learning in the field of Education across all life stages and sectors, on a world stage."* (ALARA 2010, <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/alaralletterconfirmjw.pdf> )

The global context of scholarship is also influenced by Boyer's (1990) ideas on scholarship, by Schon's (1995) call for the development of a new epistemology for the new scholarship through action research and by a movement between inclusional, dialectical and propositional thinking (Whitehead and Rayner, 2009).

In answering my question, *How do I contribute to enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for humanity in personal, professional, local and global contexts and generate educational knowledge?* I want to focus on my learning from: practitioner-researchers, whose masters and doctoral research programmes I have supervised; from B P Singh's (2010), 'When the Chalk is Down' and on four original ideas of my own that have influenced the living theories flowing through web-space from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>. Each of these living theory theses has had to satisfy internal and external examiners as to it being an original contribution to knowledge.

Space does not permit me to include all the original ideas from the research programmes of others that now influence my own enquiries. However, here are three influences from the research programmes of Eden Charles (2007), Marian Naidoo (2005) and B P Singh (2010). I have chosen these influences because of their relevance to my recent lecture and workshop tour (23<sup>rd</sup> October – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2010) of the Pedagogical University of Mozambique, the University of Saint Thomas of Mozambique and the Durban University of Technology in South Africa. I believe the relationally dynamic understandings of their values are relevant to the evolving cultural identities in Southern African voices following liberating struggles from colonization. Their values are expressed in embodied flows of life-affirming and life-enhancing energy.

Eden Charles (2007) focuses on an Ubuntu way of being to show what he means in advocating a move beyond decolonization and post-colonialism into societal re-identification through guiltless recognition. Using a multi-media narrative in his doctoral thesis Charles draws on video-data and his own art to show his understandings of how an African humanism with Ubuntu can move beyond decolonization in the creation of relationships that carry hope for the future of humanity. I believe that an Ubuntu way of being involves a relational sense of one's identity in the sense of 'I am because we are'. Such relational ways of being, of valuing and of recognizing the other are qualities I experienced with staff and students in my recent workshops in Mozambique and South Africa. In emphasizing the importance of relationally dynamic explanatory principles and standards of judgment in living theories I am seeking to recognise the humanizing influence of these African ways of being in educational knowledge.

Marian Naidoo (2005) focuses on a passion for compassion in her doctoral thesis. With the use of video-clips, including one including an Alzheimer's patient and her carer, Naidoo communicated her meanings of a passion for compassion as an explanatory principle and living standard of judgment, to the satisfaction of her examiners. I know that the meanings of our words are influenced by the context of their use. I know how important it is to contextualise visual media such as video, so that viewers are clear about the intention of the presenter in communicating certain meanings. In my understand of energy-flowing values that I believe carry hope for the future of humanity, Naidoo's passion for compassion resonates with the values I believe carry such hope.

B P Singh (2010) has just published his first book 'When the Chalk is Down', and I had the pleasure of launching the book a week ago in Durban – here is a brief extract from a paper I have just submitted to the Journal 'Inquiry in Education'.

*"On the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010 I was privileged to be a guest of honour at the book launch of B. P. Singh's (2010) 'When the Chalk is Down'. This is a living educational theory of B.P. Singh's 25 year struggle to obtain justice in relation to the deeds to his parent's house. Land issues are a significant social and political issue in South Africa because of the unjust evictions from the land during the last century and its appropriation by the colonisers.*

*B.P. Singh is an educator. His living theory traces his learning journey through teaching in schools, to his work in education at local, provincial and national levels.*

*As I said at the book launch I believe that 'When the Chalk is Down' has implications for the kind of societal re-identification, described by Charles, (2007) as requiring the influence of a living standard of Ubuntu to become a distinguishing feature of South African society. Ubuntu is an African way of being that recognizes the vital significance of a relational awareness of community in the individual's life and identity. In other words the generation of living theories from the action research of South African's, as they work and research with questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' can have societal implications as well as being significant for the lives of individuals. B. P. Singh acknowledges his own individual Indian heritage. He is also a South African whose values of humanity transcend any particular cultural heritage in a particular State. At the same time the values of humanity expressed in the living theory of 'When the Chalk is Down' are contributing to the values that could distinguish the societal-reidentification that is evolving from the 1994 Government and the legislative ending of Apartheid.*

*Such living theories with their living logics provide an answer to the constructive criticism of living theories that they are personal and do not engage with social issues such as poverty and social injustice (Noffke, 1997, p. 329)."*

Here is my 9:27 minute speech as a Guest of Honour at the Launch of B P Singh's 'When the Chalk is Down' – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010, at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Durban, South Africa. I am seeking to enhance the flow of values that carry hope for humanity in personal, professional, local and global contexts and generate educational knowledge.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUFTW5pWvgw>

Official Launch of B P Singh's 'When the Chalk is Down' - 3:47 minutes.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr6rPh0Hyds>

Presentation of Gift to Jack Whitehead by Irene Singh – BP’s wife to mark his contribution as a Guest of Honour at the book launch of ‘When the Chalk is Down’.



There is the greatest concentration of groups of Indian ancestry, outside India, in Durban, than anywhere else in the world. The Hindu notion of Sewa, or service, is a distinguishing characteristic of this community. B P Singh’s narrative shows the meaning of his own commitment of service to community. I associate this energy-flowing value with the values that carry hope for the future of humanity. I continue to feel the values of Ubuntu, a passion for compassion and of Sewa, or service, influencing the evolution of my educational influences in my own learning.

Just as the ideas of others are continuing to influence my own learning, so some original contributions from my research programme in living educational theories are influencing others. Here are four of these ideas.

In my original contributions to educational knowledge I put forward the ideas that:

- i) Each individual can generate their own living educational theories as explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work in educational enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’
- ii) The ‘I’ in the above question exists as a living contradiction in the sense of holding together the values that give meaning and purpose to their existence with their experience of their negation. I advocate the use of self-studies of video-tapes of practice to reveal to oneself one’s existence as a living contradiction.
- iii) The use of Action reflection Cycles to clarify and evolve the meanings of the embodied ontological values of practitioners as these emerge in the practice of the enquiry, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ The Action Reflection Cycles include experiencing concerns when values were not being fully realized in practice; imagined possibilities for improving practice with the choice of one possibility in an action plan; action; gathering data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the actions; evaluation of effectiveness; modification of concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations.
- iv) At the heart of the originality is the explication of an educational epistemology with living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) that include the **energy-flowing values** that constitute explanatory principles for why individual educators do what they do. This explication includes the generation and use of a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) with methodological inventiveness

(Dadds and Hart, 2001) within an awareness of natural inclusionality (Rayner, 2006, 2010). Inclusionality is a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as continuous, connective, reflexive and co-creative. In the course of clarifying and evolving the meanings of energy-flowing values as they emerge in practice, they are transformed into epistemological standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of the knowledge-claims in the living educational theories.

In making explicit these original ideas, I do not want to underemphasize the importance of the theoretical ideas of others in providing insights and articulation for the generation of an individual's living educational theory. Traditional theories can help with understanding the constraints and opportunities that are experienced in particular socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts. They can help to articulate and share previously intuitively felt and tacit understandings. These insights can be integrated and acknowledged in the generation of one's own living educational theories. For example, I integrate insights from the work of the Critical Theorists, Erich Fromm, Jürgen Habermas, (Whitehead, 2010d) Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse in my own writings and acknowledge their profound influence, along with numerous others, in my thinking and in the generation of my own living educational theories.

In conclusion I want to draw your attention to the resources at <http://www.actionresearch.net> in the living theory <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>, and Master educators <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml> sections. These provide the evidence-base for how valid explanations of educational influences in learning can be produced in explorations of the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

In the What's New section of <http://www.actionresearch.net> you can access the practitioner-researcher e-seminar I have convened for the last six years and the Action Research Africa Network I launched at the CARN study day on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at Durban University of Technology. These are encouraging the sharing of the living theories of participants with an emphasis on the provision of evidence-based accounts of educational influences in learning.

I have been most fortunate over the past twelve months to have accepted invitations to present keynotes, workshops and lectures in Mozambique, Nelson Mandela University, the University of Johannesburg, Durban University of Technology, the University of San Diego School of Leadership and Education Science, Bergen University of Technology, A Pestalozzi workshop in Bergen, A Pestalozzi workshop in Zagreb, Croatia and Edge Hill University in the UK for their 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference. You can access details of these presentations in the What's New section of <http://www.actionresearch.net> and from the last item in this section on 'Previous Items'. The Appendix 3 of the Edge Hill University keynote is particularly significant as it is my action planning as I continue to hold myself accountable to myself and others for living and evolving

my understanding of the values that carry hope for the future of humanity. In doing this I shall modify my enquiry slightly to:

**How do I enhance my contribution to the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for humanity in personal, professional, local and global contexts and generate educational knowledge?**

One way in which I shall be exploring enhancing these understandings is to integrate the Japanese cultural concept of 'Ba' (Uchiyama, et. al. 2010). 'Ba' refers to a communicative space for deepening mutual understandings of practice and of building consensus characterized by bounded instability.

I shall finish with the action plans I posted this week in the practitioner-researcher e-seminar from Sonia Hutchison, Marie Huxtable, Andy Henon, Joan Walton, Nigel Harrisson, Chris Jones and myself, as we see if we can develop a collaborative enquiry in which each of our individual enquiries can be supported. I have included the action planning template at the end of the list just in case you might like to share your commitment to improve your practice and generate knowledge in this way:

Sonia Hutchison

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/soniahutchisonarplanning.pdf>

Marie Huxtable

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/mariehuxtablearplanning.pdf>

Andrew Henon

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/andrewhenonarplanning.pdf>

Joan Walton

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/joanwaltonarplanning.pdf>

Nigel Harrisson

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/nigelharrissonarplanning.pdf>

Christine Jones

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/chrisjonesarplanning.pdf>

Jack Whitehead

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/jackwhiteheadarplanning.pdf>

Action Planning Template

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/actionplanning/arplannertemplate.doc>

I'll end with Love Jack and my e-mail signature to emphasise the importance of acknowledging, in our living standards of judgment, the values that we believe carry hope for the future of humanity, including our own.

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When Martin Dobson, a colleague in the Department of Education at the University of Bath, died in 2002 the last thing he said to me was 'Give my Love to the Department'. In the 20 years I'd worked with Martin it was his loving warmth of humanity that I recall with great life affirming pleasure and I'm hoping that in Love Jack we can share this value of common humanity.

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See the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) at: <http://ejolts.net/>

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