The Living Theory produced by Teachers and Students as a basis for Change and Development

Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University, UK.

The 26:19 minute video of the presentation is at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKBrejdC4CA

Notes for translation to be presented to a conference on '*Genuine dialogue on issues of education: Active research: teacher and student as researchers'* in the municipality of Pylaia – Hortiati, Thessaloniki, Greece on the 26 January 2013.

Abstract

In my previous experience of conferences on education around the world, I have found that the majority of presenters adopt a transmission mode of address, rather than being able to organise their contribution in a genuine dialogue. I hope that you experience my contribution on '*The Living Theory produced by Teachers and Students as a basis for Change and Development'*, in a genuine dialogue.

To contribute in a dialogical way in previous keynotes to international conferences I have produced detailed notes for the presentation and posted these on my website http://actionresearch.net before the presentation to give participants time to read them and to raise any issues or questions to me during the presentation. You will find the detailed notes for this presentation in the What's New Section of my web-site. To facilitate dialogue I shall pick out some key ideas from my notes and offer them for your

responses.

I have organized the presentation into three sections:

- How to create living-educational-theories.
- Collecting, analysing and using visual data in creating multimedia narratives which communicate and extend understandings of living-theories, contribute to an educational epistemology and serve the public good.
- Participating in and contributing to web-based resources for learning from local, national and international co-operative researching communities that are influenced by economic rationalism.

1) How to create living-educational-theories.

I first used the idea of living-educational-theories in the 1980s to distinguish my approach from what was known as the disciplines approach in which educational theory was constituted by the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. The mistake in this approach was that it viewed the values-based practical principles teachers used to explain their educational influences as at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice and that would be **replaced** in any rationally developed theory (Hirst, 1983, p.18).

Here are some points about the inclusion of 'I' in research questions, about the importance of action research and living standards in the creation of living-educational-theories

'I' Research Questions

The inclusion of 'I' in a legitimate research question such as 'How do I improve what I am doing in the context of enhancing my educational influences in learning?' may still feel strange to academics who have been used to removing the 'I' from research reports on the grounds that it is subjective and anecdotal. Such criticisms can be met through intersubjective criticism in validation groups that can strengthen the objectivity of an explanation of educational influence that is grounded in the experience of an individual 'I'.

Action Research

I distinguish action research through the use of action-reflection cycles of:

- Expressing concerns when values were not being lived as fully as thought possible.
- Imagining ways to improve practice and choosing an action plan to act on.
- Acting and gather data on which to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the actions.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the actions in relation to values.
- Modifying the concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations.
- Producing an explanation of educational influence in learning and submitting this to a validation group of between 3-8 peers to strengthen the validity of the explanation.

Educational Standards are most important in judging improvements in practice and in contributions to educational knowledge from the perspective of Living-Theory action research.

Standards

John Elliott (1998) is one of the central figures in the extending influence of action research around the world. He had this to say about 'the Greek theory of knowledge', in relation to the work of John Dewey and 'Standards-driven reforms'.

"The Greeks, according to Dewey left European societies with a legacy that became enshrined in their traditions of education. It was a legacy that located knowledge as a reflection of reality and that defined reality as the realm of fixed, static and invariant things... (Elliott, 1998, p. 140).

Elliott relates this Greek theory of knowledge to the present day emphasis on 'Standards' in education systems throughout the world. As he says, standards are defined in terms of learning outcomes, conceived either as fixed and unchanging facts and concepts (knowledge), or as behavioural responses called 'competences' or 'skills'. Standards-driven reforms take the Greek theory of knowledge for granted.

I now want to consider a different approach to standards, which doesn't deny the value of using standards as part of a process of improving learning. In fact a living-theory approach uses values as living standards (Laidlaw, 1996, 2012) of practice and judgment In this approach the externally 'imposed' standards can be engaged with, in a dialogue through which individuals continuously regenerate their own living standards in the educative process of their own self-creation.

What is different in this 'living' approach to standards from traditional 'standards' is that the living standards are embodied and expressed in the lives of practitioners. Standards, understood as living values, are embodied in our practical lives. Values give meaning and purpose to our lives and to what we do. The normal language of value-words such as love, peace, freedom, justice, integrity, care and compassion, is useful in directing attention to the meanings of the embodied values, but the meanings of such values can only be understood in the course of their emergence through time and practice. Evidence to show the ways in which this can be done can be accessed from the action research homepage of http://www.actionresearch.net , especially in the section on 'Living-Theory-Theses' (shortened from 'Living-Educational-Theory Theses) with over 40 Living-Theory DoctoralTheses being legitimated since 1995.

I make a distinction between a 'Living-Educational-Theory approach to teacher education and the 'living-educational-theories that individuals' produce to explain their educational influences. I use capitals, Living-Theory, for the general and lowercase, living-theory, when referring to a particular individual's explanation of educational influence.

Creating living-educational theories

 In a Living-Theory approach, teacher and student-researchers ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' in the context of enhancing educational influences in learning. They see themselves in their own 'I' as living contradictions who hold together their experience of holding certain values and the

experience of denying these values in their practice. They construct accounts and offer these descriptions and explanations of their own learning for public validation. These explanations include an extension and deepening of one's own self-understanding.

By public validation I mean that they submit their explanations to a validation group of between 3-8 peers which includes the questions derived from the ideas of Habermas (1976, pp 2-3) on social validation:

i) How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
ii) How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions?
iii) How can I extend and deepen my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences on my writings and actions?
iv) How can I enhance the authenticity of my writings over time and interaction?

I also recommend the use of the six principles described by Winter (1989) for enhancing the rigour of action research.

Since my 1999 address in Patras (Whitehead, 1999) I have focused on the use of visual data in creating multi-media explanations of educational influences in learning.

2) Collecting, analysing and using visual data in creating multimedia narratives which communicate and extend understandings of living-theories, contribute to an educational epistemology and serve the public good.

Moving forward to 2013 I shall focus on the transformations since 1999, in the meanings of living values as explanatory principles and standards of judgment. These transformations in meanings have been influenced by the use of digital technology, especially in the use of visual narratives. This is not to deny the importance of communicating meaning, using words alone. It is to stress the importance of visual data in communicating the meanings of the embodied expressions of values and emotions that are significant in explanations of educational influence (Crotty, 2011, 2012; Huxtable 2012).

My 1999 address to the conference in Patras can be compared to my multi-media presentation to a workshop of the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology, on 7th December 2012 on 'Improving evidence-based coaching psychology with action research, living-educational-theories and multi-media narratives' (Whitehead, 2012)

<u>I am claiming that the visual data in the presentation shows my embodied expression of a life-affirming energy that is necessary to an explanation of my educational influence.</u>

Here is how I justified this assertion:

"The ease of integrating visual and audio data in analyzing and explaining the influences of coaching practice will be, I'm sure, known to you all. My preference

of using Apple Mac with the i-movie application and Quicktime is because of the ease of transferring raw data from an HD camera into the computer and then compressing the large files into .mov files for use in quicktime. Here is how I used the facility in Quicktime for moving the cursor smoothly along a clip, to clarifying and communicating meanings of embodied expressions of energy flowing values of love and compassion in explanations of influences in learning, using what I call empathetic resonance.

I first encountered the idea of empathetic resonance in the writings of Sardello (2008). For Sardello, *empathetic resonance*, is the resonance of the individual soul coming into resonance with the Soul of the World (p. 13). I am using *empathetic resonance* to communicate a recognition of the immediate presence of the other in communicating the living values that the other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life.

In my use of visual data, with digital technology I want to emphasise that I do not believe that the visual data can usually 'speak for itself' in terms of the meanings being communicated, without the context and meanings that are integrated with the visual data in a visual narrative.

In this concluding part of the workshop I want to focus on the importance of sharing meanings from visual data in visual narratives that can be submitted to a validation group to strengthen the validity of the evidence-based explanations within the narratives.

> *The use of visual narrative and empathetic resonance in clarifying and communicating energy-flowing values as explanatory principles*

Visual narratives in living theories are the stories told by practitioner-researchers that include their descriptions and explanations of their educational influences in learning. If you are given a video-clip without context, it is likely the interpretations will differ widely. A visual narrative that includes the video-data as evidence in relation to a knowledge-claim, allows you to judge the validity of the researcher's assertions.

Whilst experiences of harmony and expressions of pleasure have emerged in my educational journey, the journey includes some difficult and painful experiences. Here is how I have communicated something of the nature of the difficulties in a previous publication that includes the first video-clip:

"I have documented most of the difficulties experienced over the 30 years between 1976-2006 in previous publications (Whitehead, 1993, 2004). They include a 1976 judgment by the University that I had exhibited forms of behaviour which had harmed the good order and morale of the School of Education. They include the 1980 and 1982 judgments that I could not question the judgments of examiners of my two doctoral submissions under any circumstances. They include

the 1987 judgment that my activities and writings were a challenge to the present and proper order of the university and not consistent with the duties the University wished me to pursue.

In 1990, based on this judgment about my activities and writings, as evidence of a prima facie breach of my academic freedom, Senate established a working party on a matter of academic freedom. They reported in 1991: 'The working party did not find that... his academic freedom had actually been breached. This was however, because of Mr Whitehead's persistence in the face of pressure; a less determined individual might well have been discouraged and therefore constrained.'
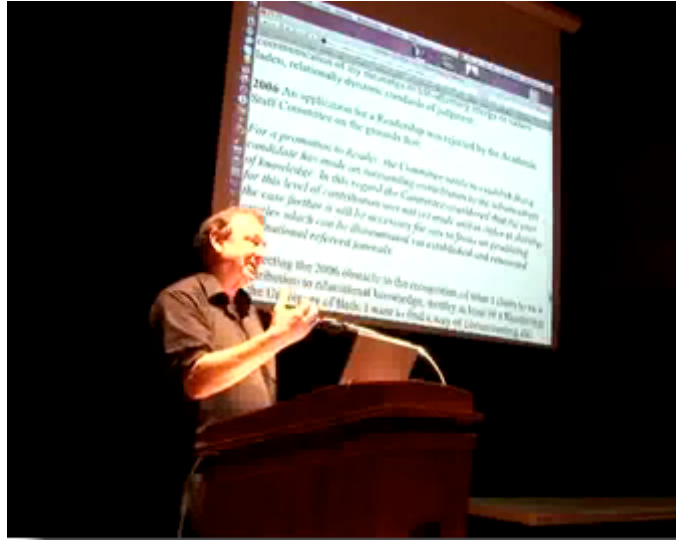
Here is my re-enactment of a meeting with the working party where I had been invited to respond to a draft report in which the conclusion was that my academic freedom had not been breached; a conclusion I agreed with. What I did not agree with was that there was no recognition of the pressure to which I had been subjected to while sustaining my academic freedom.

 Video 1 56 second clip of *[Responding to matters of power and academic freedom](#)*

In the clip I think you may feel a disturbing shock in the recognition of the power of my anger in the expression of energy and my passion for academic freedom and academic responsibility. Following my meeting with the working party the report that went to Senate acknowledged that the reason my academic freedom had not been breached was because of my persistence in the face of pressure. This phrase, 'persistence in the face of pressure' is a phrase I continue to use in comprehending my meaning of Walton's standard of judgment of spiritual resilience gained through connection with a loving dynamic energy (Walton, 2008)." (Whitehead, 2008)

The second, 7: 21 minute clip below is taken from the end of a keynote address I gave to the International Conference of Teacher Research in 2008 in New York. I can see myself explicitly rechanneling the anger expressed in the first clip, into a loving, creative and humorous response that I believe will resonate with you as an invitation to enquire with me in a creative space.

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=KXLqGAAK-D0

As I move the cursor along several times to the end, and back to the beginning, and back to the end again, I find myself pausing at 6mins 44 seconds. As I move towards and past this point, I feel and see myself expressing what I mean by a **flow of life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity**. I listen to what I am saying and I hear myself articulating my meanings of the significance of this flow of energy with values for my productive life in education and as explanatory principles in explanations of my educational influences in learning. I feel myself being receptively responsive to my audience in offering the gift of my explanation in the hope that they will accept it in the spirit in which it is intended and find something of use-value for themselves and their own work in education.

In the 6 minutes 44 seconds before this image I feel and see myself rechanneling expressions of anger from the past experiences shown in the first video-clip into a flow of dynamic loving energy (Walton, 2008) in what I am doing. In this clip I feel myself expressing this loving energy as an explanatory principle for what I am doing in education. I also see myself articulating these understandings in a way I believe communicated with my audience at the time. I hope that this is communicated to you in the here and now.

In constructing a visual narrative with an explanation of educational influence that is intended to communicate with a reader I am aware of two phases of writing. In the first phase I produce a writerly text in which I am clarifying for myself the explanatory principles I used to explain my influence. These meanings usually

emerge in the course of the writing and are clear at the end of the writing. I then produce a readerly text which usually involves bringing what has been clarified at the end of the writerly text into a 'framing' for the reader at the beginning of the readerly text together with a description of how the writings are organised to justify the knowledge-claims in the writings.

I am claiming that the visual data in a visual narrative can enhance the validity of the inclusional understandings of the explanatory principles that can explain educational influences in learning. It can not only enhance the validity of the inclusional understandings. It can transcend the arguments about contradiction in the 2,500 argument between dialectical and formal logicians. Dialecticians claim that contradiction is at the nucleus of explanations of change (Marcuse, 1964, p. 104). Formal logicians claim that contradictions must be removed from theories because theories that contain contradictions are useless (Popper, 1963, p. 316). This inclusional logic is a living logic in the sense that the explanations are distinguished by energy-flowing values that can integrate insights from both dialectical thinking. This logic can accept that the 'I' in the question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' exists as a living contradiction. It can also accept insights from formal or propositional theories, in understanding the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in the ecological complexity of our practice and our writings."

Let me return to my imaginary conversation with Socrates as a 23 year old student teacher in 1967, and make a contribution to the conversation some 45 years later as a professional educator. In the quotation above Socrates explained to Phaedrus that there are two ways of coming to know through a dialectic of question and answer. We can hold things together with a general idea and we can analyse things in their separate parts. He has called 'dialecticians' those who can hold together both the One and the Many.

Here is my contribution to this conversation about ways of knowing. I hope that it stimulates your own contribution to local, regional and international researching communities as we seek to both improve practice and generate educational knowledge.

Whitehead responds to Socrates

"I see what you mean, Socrates, about two ways of coming to know. I wonder if there is a third way in which we can 'come to know' through exploring questions of the kind, 'How do I live my values more fully in my practice?' within the process of creating our living educational theories . I am suggesting that it is possible to create a new Greek theory of knowledge on the basis of such enquiries. What we could do is to ask, answer and research questions of the kind asked by Tony Ghaye in his work with vulnerable children, 'How can we improve the educational experiences of the most vulnerable children in Bombay?' (Ghaye, 1999; Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998)." I am suggesting below that we ask, research and answer such questions in contributing to local, national, and international researching communities that are influenced by economic rationalism.

3)Participating in and contributing to web-based resources for learning from local, national and international co-operative researching communities that are influenced by economic rationalism.

Fr. Barnabe D' Souza (2008) has been asking such questions as 'How can we improve the educational experiences of the most vulnerable children in Mumbai?' for many years. In 2008 I had the pleasure of making the external examiners recommendation that he should be awarded his doctorate for his thesis on *Changing Mindsets? Evolution of a Rehabilitation Programme for Chemically Dependent Male Street Adolescents in a Major Indian City.*

His most recent publication on *From Ecstasy to Agony and Back: Journeying with Adolescents on the Street* (D' Souza, 2011) draws on his doctoral enquiry:
For me the great significance of his narrative is the way that it shows the children creating meanings for themselves out of their own experiences and understandings and taking ownership of the actions that move them off the streets and facilitating their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Most readers will not have had to deal with such extreme personal difficulties. However, what we could all do is to share our stories of our learning to live as fully as we can the values that carry hope for humanity and to learn how to the strengthen our collective influence in making the world a better place to be.

A further illustration of the contribution an educational community could make to the creation of a new Greek theory of knowledge can be seen in evidence of the effectiveness of a living-theory approach to the in-service education of teachers in terms of enhancing educational influences in learning and in generating educational knowledge. Evidence from this approach constitutes a 2013 themed issue of Gifted Education International (Huxtable & Whitehead 2012; Whitehead & Huxtable 2012) and the contents can be accessed from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/geicontents1212.pdf.

You could contribute to an existing community of educational enquiries by:

i) Joining the practitioner-researcher group at:

https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=practitioner-researcher&A=1 .

ii) Contributing to the international continuing professional development project at:

http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/ .

iii) Sharing your ideas by submitting a contribution to the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) at http://ejolts.net .

Because of your interest in active learning in in-service teacher education I think you may find particularly significant the materials in the section, 'Master Educators' Writings' (see http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml). This contains

many accounts from teacher-researchers as they work at improving practice and generating knowledge. The process of supporting a Living-Theory approach to teachers' professional development is outlined in the section accessible from the homepage on *Action planning in improving practice and in generating educational knowledge* from http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arplanner.htm .

The process involves action reflection cycles of defining concerns; sharing the values that are creating the concern; developing action plans; acting and gathering data; evaluating the effectiveness of actions in terms of values, skills and understandings; modifying concerns, plans and actions in the light of the evaluations; the construction of a description and explanation for the professional learning of the teacher which constitutes their living educational theory.

In this section there are examples of teachers' action enquiries from primary/infant secondary schools and higher education.

The living-educational-theory doctoral theses and masters dissertations at http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml might be of particular use to you in producing your own knowledge and living-educational-theories.

If you do decide to create and share your own living-educational-theories you will find an international culture of enquiry already exists to support your own enquiries. See the Other Homepages of Interest Section of http://www.actionresearch.net at:

http://www.actionresearch.net/otherpages.shtml

I also want to draw attention to the practitioner research supported by Jacqueline Delong at Brock University (Delong, 2011; Delong & Wideman 1997; Delong & Whitehead 1999). If you go to http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/ and access both the Brantford Master's Cohorts of 2010 and 2012 and the Bluewater Master's Cohort you can access the living theory accounts tutored by Jacqueline Delong.
These include Elizabeth Campbell's (2011) *Journey to the Otherway: How Can I Improve My Practice By Living My Values of Love and Joy More Fully?*

> Abstract: This paper captures my journey to create a living educational theory. In an effort to answer the question: "How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully?" in an authentic and meaningful way. I make use of methodological inventiveness and alternative representation. Throughout the project, I share narratives, reflections, paintings, video clips, songs and voices of "the Other" to articulate, explicate and validate my values and living educational theory.

Whilst agreeing with Campbell's emphasis on the importance of love and joy in the creation of living-educational-theories I also want to emphasise the importance of integrating insights from theories of economic rationality in explanations of educational influences in learning. Economic rationality can be closely related to the economic

globalization which we are all living within and which is being felt most acutely in Greece.

Integrating the influences of economic rationalism in our explanations of educational influences in learning.

This brings me to my final point about the many lessons still to be learnt in the process of developing a Living-Theory research approach to the improvement of teacher education. I am drawn to Elliott's point that:

"Centralized social engineering in the form of standards-led curriculum development cannot deliver the fundamental changes in pedagogy that will need to occur if our future citizens are not going to be anything more than passive consumers in a society controlled by market forces and governed by market values." (Elliott, p. 159, 1998)

In the work I have presented so far I have stressed the importance of supporting individual teachers in creating their living educational theories in their enquiries into their action research to improve their classroom practice through enquiring how to live their values more fully. There is much to be achieved within the present institutional and curriculum structures. There is also however, much that is constraining within the present structures. These constraints will need transforming into supports, if the full educational potential of teacher education is to be realised in classrooms with students. Understanding how to do this through **cooperative** projects could hold the key to overcoming the constraints of economic rationalism through living values as fully as possible.

If you wish to work at the development of a Living-Theory approach to teacher education I would hold this point at the focus of what you do. It is vital, in my view, to find the appropriate balance between support for teacher-led initiatives and the development of appropriate system's support from central agencies in relation to improving standards through living educational theories. Do please read Pam Lomax's (1999b) Presidential Address to BERA 1998 in which she analyses five 'threats' within the English culture to the development of such approaches. Whilst this was written 15 years ago it is still most apposite. There may be an implication for Greek Educational Researchers in her 'Threat number 4' (p. 14) - academic journal editors and reviewers are predisposed to reject the type of research paper coming from a school-university partnership context. If you decide to develop living-theory approaches to in-service teacher education, you may find it necessary to transform, alongside your practical initiatives in teacher education, the dominant theory of knowledge of your universities.

It may be that multi-media accounts published in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS - http://ejolts.net) could help you to make a case to your Universities for accepting such accounts from practitioner-researchers, with the new living standards of judgment for their Living-Theory, masters and doctoral degrees. Some of you may of course already be doing this. I am stressing the importance of accepting such accounts because it was only in 2004 that the University of Bath changed its regulations governing

the submission of research degrees, to allow the submission of e-media. Some of the most impressive work in generating multi-media accounts is being supported by Margaret Farren (2005, 2009, 2011) at Dublin City University (see http://webpages.dcu.ie/~farrenm/)

By doing this you could provide, as Greek Educational Researchers, a central support on a global basis, for legitimating action research accounts in the Academy. I have suggested that such a theory of knowledge could be grounded in the living-theories of teacher-researchers and students as they ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

We must not of course mask, in our educational research, the constraining influences of damaging forms of economic and political governance. Greece citizens have perhaps suffered more that most of the 47 member countries of the Council of Europe from deregulated financial markets governed only by capitalist principles.

In 1992 I attended the Second World Congress of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association. I heard Robin McTaggart make the following contribution in his keynote to the conference. I think that the points about de-valuation and de-moralisation may resonate with your experiences.

> Nevertheless, the new 'economic rationalism' is a worldwide phenomena which 'guides' not only the conduct of transnational corporations, but governments and their agencies as well. It does so with increasing efficacy and pervasiveness. I use the term 'guides' here in quotes to make a particular point. Economic rationalism is not merely a term which suggests the primacy of economic values. It expresses commitment to those values in order to serve particular sets of interests ahead of others. Furthermore, it disguises that commitment in a discourse of 'economic necessity' defined by its economic models. We have moved beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were economic ones (de-valuation) to a situation where moral questions are denied completely (de-moralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability (as if greed had nothing to do with it). Broudy (1981) has described 'de-valuation' and de-moralization' in the following way:
>
>> De-valuation refers to diminishing or denying the relevance of all but one type of value to an issue; de-moralization denies the relevance of moral questions. The reduction of all values – intellectual, civic, health, among others – to a money value would be an example of de-valuation; the slogan 'business' is business' is an example of de-moralization (Broudy, 1981: 99)   (McTaggart, 1992, p. 50).

In contrast to the protection of financial deregulation and economic rationality I am proposing that those interested in a Living-Theory approach to living their values as fully as possible should embrace the values of cooperation as set out in the Special Issue of the 2011 Journal of Co-operative Studies, edited by Maureen Breeze (2011).

I find the suite of six organisational values (self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity) and the four ethical values (honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others), can be interpreted readily from an educational perspective. They provide a language to explore my motives and actions and scaffold my reflection. (Breeze, 2011, p.1)

The United Nations designated 2012 as the Year Of The Cooperatives. One of the ways I think we could fulfill a mission to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly enquiry related to education, to improve practice and to serve the public good is to develop a cooperative programme of research together. I am thinking of a cooperative enquiry in which we support each individual enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing whilst exercising our 'responsibility for the well-being of all?'

In conclusion I would like to thank the organisers of the conference for inviting me to present this paper to you today. My passion for education owes much to those imaginary conversations with your Greek citizens and academics who lived over two millennia ago and contributed so profoundly to Western views of Knowledge. I am hoping that we can move forward together with a sense of belonging to an international community of professional educators and educational researchers. I hope you can identify with my continuing passion for education. A passion which you could help to support through your creativity in contributing to new forms of educational knowledge in teacher education from the ancestral home of the originators of the Academy.

Jack Whitehead, 2 January 2013

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