Can educational psychology develop to meet the challenges, choices and changes of a 21ˢᵗ century world?

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Abstract: Since the 1970s there have been many changes in England to qualifications required to practice as an educational psychologist and the nature of the organisations for which they work. These reflect the slow transformation in societal attitudes to the purposes of public services, education and the role and responsibilities of associated professionals. As a consequence, educational psychology« as a distinct field of knowledge and practice is gradually being replaced by the general practice of psychology in Education. I believe that recognising, valuing and working to improve educational psychology as a distinct field of knowledge and practice can make a valuable contribution to the educational development of children and young people as they begin their life-long learning to live satisfying, productive and worthwhile lives for themselves and others as global citizens. Since leaving the profession of educational psychology I have continued to develop theory and practice as a professional educational practitioner supporting the professional development of other educational practitioners working in diverse fields of practice and cultural contexts. I see them faced with the same challenges as educational psychologists to realise their responsibilities as professional educational practitioners working within the constraints imposed by their employers and national government. Education is a values-laden concept and the challenge to us all is not to lose sight of that. I see how members of other professions are creating possibilities of holding fast to values that distinguish educational practice, which I believe educational psychologists might find of use. In this paper I offer an argument for distinguishing between 'educational psychology as a distinct field of knowledge and practice' and 'the practice of psychology in Education', why it is important and possible ways forward.

Keywords: professional educational practice, practitioner educational research, living educational theory research, educational psychology practice, flourishing of humanity

Se lahko pedagoška psihologija razvije za soočanje z izzivi, izbirami in spremembami sveta v 21. stoletju?

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Povzetek: Od sedemdesetih let preteklega stoletja so bile v Angliji vpeljane številne spremembe kvalifikacij, potrebnih za delo pedagoškega psihologa, spremenile pa so so se tudi institucije, v katerih ti delujejo. Te spremembe kažejo na počasne spremembe družbenih stališč do vloge javnih služb, izobraževanja in vloge ter odgovornosti strokovnjakov na tem področju. Posledično tudi pedagoško psihologijo kot samostojno področje védenja in stroke postopoma nadomešča splošnejša »psihologija v izobraževanju«. Verjamem, da lahko prepoznavanje, cenjenje in stremenje k izoboljšanju pedagoške psihologije kot samostojnega področja delovanja pomembno prispeva k izobraževalnemu razvoju otrok in mladih, ki začenjajo svoje vseživljenjsko učenje, da bi živeli zadovoljivo, produktivno in polno življenje zase ter druge člane globalne skupnosti. Po tem, ko sem zapustila poklic pedagoške psihologinje, sem teorijo in prakso razvijala kot pedagoški praktik in popirala strokovni razvoj drugih praktikov, ki delujejo v raznolikih strokovnih in kulturnih kontekstih. Pri tem opažam, da se ti soočajo z enakimi izivi kot pedagoški psihologi, in spoznavam, da so njihove odgovornosti venomer soočene s omejitvami, ki jih postavljajo njihovi zaposlovalci ali vlada. Izobraževanje je koncept, ki ga opredeljujejo in polnijo vrednote, izziv vseh nas pa je, da tega ne pozabimo. Sama opažam, da druge stroke ustvarjajo pogoje za to, da ohranjajo vrednote, ki odlikujejo izobraževalne prakse in za katere verjamem, da bi lahko bile uporabne tudi za pedagoške psihologe. V prispevku predstavljam argumente za ločevanje med »pedagoško psihologijo kot specifičnim poljem védenja in delovanja« ter »prakso psihologije v izobraževanju«, pojasnim, zakaj je takšna ločnica potrebna in predstavim mogoče načine prihodnjega delovanja.

Ključne besede: strokovno pedagoško delo, pedagoško raziskovanje izvajalcev, živeto raziskovanje pedagoške teorije, pedagoško psihološka praksa, blagostanje človeštva

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What is psychology? According to the British Psychological Society (2021) "it's about understanding what makes people tick and how this understanding can help us address many of the problems and issues in society today" (para. 2).

With that in mind the question that forms the title of this paper, 'Can educational psychology develop to meet the challenges, choices and changes of a 21st century world?' begs other questions, such as, 'what distinguishes *educational* psychology as theory and practice from other psychologies?' Such questions in turn beg other questions, such as, 'what distinguishes 'education' as 'educational'?'

The United Nations *Educational*, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (my emphasis) declares, 'Education Transforms Lives'. I believe they are right. This quotation from Ginott (1972) vividly illustrates why we should be clear about what transformation we want to bring about through developing educational psychology theory and practice and keep checking that our efforts are indeed transforming lives in the ways we intend:

> *On the first day of the new school year, all the teachers in one private school received the following note from their principal.*
> *Dear Teacher,*
> *I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:*
> – *Gas chambers built by* learned *engineers.*
> – *Children poisoned by* educated *physicians.*
> – *Infants killed by* trained *nurses.*
> *Women and babies shot and burned by* high school *and* college *graduates.*
> *So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.*
> *Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human. (p. 317)*

Reiss and White (2013), in 'An aims-based curriculum: The significance of human flourishing for schools' confronts a similar question:

> *What are schools for? In very general terms, their aims are the same as those of a home with children. The task of both institutions is two-fold and simplicity itself, to equip each child:*
> – *to lead a life that is personally flourishing,*
> – *to help others to do so, too. (p. 1)*

Taking from Reiss and White and Ginott I go further than 'education' being limited by a time of life. I consider the purpose of education is a life-long values-laden process of learning to lead a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for self and others. It involves creating valid knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world and the confidence and competencies to enquire, inquire and research.

Enquire – ask questions to find out more about something.
Inquire – to formally investigate to resolve doubt or solve a problem (is it better to use this or that?).
Research – a formal work undertaken systematically to increase the stock of knowledge. (Oxford University Press, n.d.)

I believe that it is self-evident that psychology as "the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behaviour, from communication and memory to thought and emotion" (British Psychological Society, 2021, para. 1) should develop knowledge for people to draw on to enhance their education. In this paper I offer an argument for distinguishing between educational psychology as a distinct field of knowledge and practice and the practice of psychology in Education, why it is important and possible ways forward for educational psychology theory and practice to contribute to bringing into being a world where humanity flourishes; my humanity and your humanity, the flourishing of Humanity as a global social formation which transcends time and place. I present a claim that adopting Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development enables an educational psychologist to improve practice and realise their responsibilities as a member of a profession, as a member of the social formations within which they practice and as a member of Humanity. I conclude by inviting you to test my claim yourself in practice.

Context

Over the years qualifications to practice as an educational psychologist have changed along with societal attitudes to public services in general, and the purposes of Education and professional educational practitioners (such as educational psychologists) in particular. This is reflected in educational psychologists' views of what constitutes their responsibilities as professional educational practitioners. *'Educational* psychology as a distinct field of knowledge and practice' is gradually being replaced by 'the practice of psychology in Education'. I believe the distinction is important and has implications for the development of educational psychology as a field of knowledge and professional practice of those within it.

In this paper I clarify:
– Distinguishing responsibilities of a *professional* practitioner
– What distinguishes the professional practice of *educational* psychology from other forms of applied psychological practice
– Implications of educational psychologists adopting Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development

I conclude with an invitation to you to test the veracity of my argument.

Distinguishing responsibilities of a professional practitioner

Employed as an educational psychologist I was continually faced with questions: 'How did I know whether I was making a difference that enhanced the lives of children?', 'How could I improve the advice I gave concerning individual children? and 'How could I contribute to improving the educational experience of children and young people?' I could not answer such questions from a perspective of education as a values-laden concept until I was introduced to Living Educational Theory Research and 'living-educational-theory' as a valid explanation of educational influence in a person's own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations (Whitehead, 1989a, 1989b). Professional practitioners working in diverse contexts and fields of practice employ this research methodology. Details of the 17th European Congress of Psychology conference, foregrounds some of the distinguishing features of a *professional* practice: responsibilities to test the validity of knowledge claims rigorously and to contribute to the growth of the profession's academic and professional knowledge bases and discourses. The doctorates of Hymer (2007) and Huxtable (2012) illustrate the relevance of educational psychologist as professionals adopting Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development. By doing so their focus moved from taking and applying psychological theories, for example to improve instruction, to researching their educational practice to understand and improve it and generate valid, values-laden explanations of their educational influence in the learning of children, young people, teachers and colleagues and the organisations they were members of.

Another distinguishing responsibility of a professional practitioner is to practice with regard to their values and societal values (ethics). The British Educational Research Association (2018), the British Psychological Society (2018) and the Health and Care Professions Council (2016) all refer to professional practice being governed by an overarching concern of an educational practitioner and researcher for the well-being of *all* and with regard to their own well-being too.

Through my years employed as an educational psychologist I was keenly aware of the complexity of recognising and resolving problems when to act for the well-being of one person, organisation or community might require acting against the well-being of another. Such considerations are beyond the various guidance documents and the expectation of organisations for compliance. This challenge is taken up by Living Educational Theory Researchers as they identify, explore and try to improve matters where they experience themselves as living contradictions and/or they experience their values contradicted by others.

Understanding, improving and contributing valid, values-laden explanations of practice is at the heart of Living Educational Theory Research, which makes it of particular relevance for developing educational psychology theory and practice to meet the challenges, choices and changes of a 21st century world. Living Educational Theory Researchers hold themselves to account for the influence they are having in the learning and lives of others as well as the social formations they are part of. They clarify, challenge and evolve their values as they emerge in the course of their research and identify and seek to address contradictions in order to enhance their educational influence in the learning of people and social formations (such as school, local authority, Government, professional bodies).

Another distinguishing feature of being professional is that knowledge claims are tested with respect to rigour and validity. In the process of researching their practice to improve it Living Educational Theory Researchers ask peers and others to help them improve what they are doing and test the trustworthiness of their knowledge claims by responding to questions related to Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity:

– How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
– How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my claim to educational knowledge?
– How can I deepen and extend my understanding of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my practice and explanations?
– How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in the sense of showing that I am living my values as fully as possible?

Employed as an educational psychologist I held myself responsible to the community within which I worked, my employer and my profession, to improve the quality of education experienced by children and young people. I held in mind the statement by the British Psychological Society (2010):

Ethics guidelines are necessary to clarify the conditions under which psychological research can take place. However, as stated in the Code of Ethics and Conduct, '... no Code can replace the need for psychologists to use their professional and ethical judgement' ... Fundamentally, 'thinking is not optional'. (p. 4)

Thinking about the various expressions of ethical practice and research I do not believe it is sufficient for me to be satisfied that I am simply compliant. I also have a responsibility to continually challenge myself and others to identify and take whatever further measures we can to help ensure the well-being of *all*.

I believe as a professional I am responsible for my practice and I am beholden to continually seek to understand, explain and improve it. To do that I believe I need to research my practice, understanding research in the way Eisner (1993) expresses: "We do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there" (p. 10).

I go further than Eisner and say that I do research to try to understand in order to make this world, and not just our schools, a better place for all. I do this understanding a professional practitioner to be someone who:
– Continues to study to extend their cognitive range and concern, keep up-to-date with field of practice knowledge and contribute to it

– Abides by the ethical standards of their profession and seeks to enhance them
– Takes responsibility for their practice by researching into it. They do so to understand and improve what they are doing and test the validity of their claims to be improving it.
– Seeks to make a contribution to the flourishing of Humanity by making public valid accounts of the educational knowledge they generate through their values-laden professional practitioner self-study educational research.

What distinguishes the professional practice of educational psychology from other forms of applied psychological practice

Most definitions of educational psychology make reference to learning but not to what distinguishes the learning as educational. However, it is that which is key to distinguishing professional practice of educational psychology from other forms of applied psychological practice.

Since I first qualified as an educational psychologist I conceived of my practice as that of an *educational* psychologist. However, there is no unequivocal understanding of what the practice of an educational psychologist is or what distinguishes it from, for example, the practice of a neuropsychologist or child psychologist. I believed it to be more than a reflection of the employing establishment or organisation but for years I was unclear about what distinguished *educational* psychology from other psychological practices.

When I began working as an educational psychologist in the 1970's I tried to contribute to improving the learning of children and young people referred by a concerned adult, commonly a teacher. The child or young person did not refer to me; an adult referred them and often without their knowledge. This raised issues as to who had the problem, the nature of the advice I offered, to whom and why. Questions such as these were at the heart of much soul searching and many heated discussions among members of the profession then.

It began to dawn on me that effective instruction and teaching to objectives could increase a test score but often skills were not generalised or adapted by the child to deal with other challenges described, for example, by Haring et al. (1978) and Bloom (1956) as the top of a learning hierarchy or West Burnham (2006) as 'profound'. Further, it did not necessarily enable the child to become a more confident, happy and independent learner or humane person. I also became increasingly concerned that some children and young people appeared to be less confident and took less responsibility for their learning and life as a result of intervention. I have heard a similar concern increasingly expressed in recent years by teachers, tutors and even doctoral supervisors. Irrespective of the setting or age of the learner many appear incapable or reluctant to accept responsibility for their learning, and show no initiative when faced with even a slightly novel problem or task. I have also heard pupils and students complaining when they have not been told exactly what and how to learn,

or when they do not find the lessons 'fun'. From my own experience of providing workshops, I have found a disturbing number of teachers behaving similarly.

I am not suggesting that as an educational psychologist I should not contribute to developing effective and efficient instruction or enabling learners to enjoy learning in school. What I am saying is that I now realise what more I could and should contribute if my practice is to be understood as educational. I began to explore this in a paper presented to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2006 annual conference on the role of an educational psychologist (Huxtable, 2006). My thinking has progressed since then but sometimes a short trip along memory lane can help clarify the present:

> When I started this description might have served to describe what I thought I was doing:
> *...applying psychological theories, research and techniques to help children and young people who may have learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems. (based on the Association of Educational Psychologists definition of Educational Psychology)*
> Through writing this paper I now understand and research my practice as a senior educational psychologist:
> *'... working within the education system with the educational intent of engaging with others to generate and research their own living educational psychological theories, so we might each influence our own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we live and work'*
> I am currently understanding educational psychology as:
> *'comprising a living body of knowledge, skills, understandings and values concerning how, why, when, where and what humans learn, expressed and researched with an educational intent through the generation of living educational theories and practice.' (Huxtable, 2006, pp. 6–7)*

I draw on the language and knowledge base of education research to improve instruction, training and schooling but need to be clear how I use them to improve educational experiences, opportunities and relationships. For instance, when children first begin school, they are proficient at acquiring a variety of highly complex skills and a vast range of concrete and conceptual information. Some have acquired more of some aspects than others but none-the-less young humans have an amazing facility to acquire skills and information and to learn. However, 'learning' has many meanings as eloquently expressed by Biesta (2006):

> Learning theorists of both an individualistic and a sociocultural bent have developed a range of accounts of how learning – or more precisely, how the process of learning – takes place. Although they differ in their description and explanation of the process, for example, by focusing on processes in the brain or

legitimate peripheral participation, many of such accounts assume that learning has to do with the acquisition of something "external," something that existed before the act of learning and that, as a result of learning, becomes the possession of the learner. (p. 26)

I am distinguishing learning as a process of creation and not simply one of acquisition. The creative learning process I am particularly concerned with is educational, that is, learning concerned with what it is for a person to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life for themselves and others; a life that expresses their best intent informed by their humanitarian life-enhancing values.

Education concerns the whole person not just a bit of them. There is often an implied separation of head, heart and body in schooling as Robinson (2006) points out in his 'Do schools kill creativity' TED talk.

We all have bodies, don't we? Did I miss a meeting? (Laughter) Truthfully, what happens is, as children grow up, we start to educate them progressively from the waist up. And then we focus on their heads. And slightly to one side. (9:00)

Academics often seem ill at ease when faced with the messiness of human functioning. Practitioners in Education by contrast often appear to want to discard the 'head', declaring, "I don't have time for all that theory stuff" or "Just tell me what to do I don't have time to think". This seems to me somewhat perverse, when educators say they want their students to think and take responsibility for their learning. The result is a narrowing focus by schools, colleges and universities on the standards and related high-stakes tests set by Governments, rather than on enhancing the educational experience and opportunities they offer.

The pressures created by an increasing emphasis on high-stakes tests and ranking have almost eliminated space, time and opportunity in Education establishments for learners to develop as knowledge-creators and in effect disenfranchises people from their own learning and lives. The study by Amrein and Berliner (2002) in the USA exemplifies the argument surrounding high-stakes tests:

Although test scores on state-administered tests usually increase after high-stakes testing policies are implemented, the evidence presented here suggests that in these instances students are learning the content of the state-administered test and perhaps little else. This learning does not however appear to have any meaningful carryover effect. (p. 57)

And similarly, their conclusion on the negating effects:

Substantial evidence exists that high-stakes tests do create the negative, unintended consequences about which critics worry and that make high-stakes high school graduation exams objectionable. It is quite possible that the adverse consequences of high-stakes

tests outweigh the benefits that advocates claim they have since even the intended benefits, for example increased academic achievement, of these tests are hard to corroborate. (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, p. 3)

Mansell (2007) also offer very persuasive arguments concerning the damage that such use of testing has on educational experiences. Borland (2003) makes the argument that many make as to the control that this form of monitoring exerts which are of particular relevance for educational psychologist:

In education, according to Susan Gallagher (1999), hierarchical observation is used as a technology of power when educators assume an "aloof and objective position from which they see students more clearly in both a figurative sense and a literal one" (p. 77).

One way of doing this is through psychometrics, using measurement as a way to control students not only by quantifying and ranking them, but also by reminding them that they are constantly being observed and measured. This technology of power has emerged in contemporary times in a particularly virulent form in the hands of educational bureaucrats and politicians who use the so-called standards movement – wholesale standardized testing – as a way of exercising control over educators and students, especially marginalized students... In this case, as Foucault (1995) held was the norm in modern life, one's internal knowledge of being observed and judged, not the external power of the state or its symbolic trappings, is the medium through which power and control are enacted (pp. 108–109).

He makes a point that educational psychologist might well attend to; the unintended effect on educators and their students of tests, which is contrary to an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian process of learning that is educational.

Pring (2000) describes practice as "a collection of different activities that are united in some common purpose, embody certain values and make each of the component activities intelligible" (p. 27).

The difficulties seem to arise where the educator loses sight of the educational purpose of what they are doing. Pring (2000) identifies, as I have, that the same activities may be evaluated differently:

Two sets of activities might, on the surface, appear to be very similar; one might be tempted to say they are the same educational practice. But further probing, revealing different explanations, purposes and values, might suggest the very opposite. Moreover, what appears to be effective within an educational practice, defined in one way, might prove to be ineffective when it is defined in another. Thus, rote learning of historical dates might seem highly effective within an educational practice where the capacity to repeat such dates is seen as part of a broader worthwhile activity, but highly ineffective when the purpose of learning history includes a care for and a love of the subject. (p. 28)

The situation is more problematic when one activity can negate the other. For example, in the desire to improve a skill swiftly the educational purpose and love of learning can be destroyed. Perversely, education as an educational experience with a focus on passion infused enquiry learning and enhancing the sophistication of a learner's abilities to research to create, and to offer, valid knowledge as a gift to themselves and others, can at times improve test scores better than objectives led instruction.

As I progressed my enquiry into 'high ability' learning there was increasing focus of the Government on the use of simple metrics and league tables to judge the quality of what schools, colleges and universities offered. At the same time, I was becoming clearer about what was not educational although I was still puzzling over what in Education *was* educational and how to evaluate the results of my efforts to improve 'the process of education here'. I began to clarify my thinking when I wrote on (M. Huxtable, personal notes, October 4, 2005):

> *Why do I do what I do? I want children to grow as people who are comfortable in their own skin, knowing themselves, liking themselves, at peace with themselves, knowing what they want to work on, to improve, and to have the courage to change and accept their own stumbling and that of other people as part of the journey.*
>
> *I believe that an individual learns what they see themselves capable of learning and what is of value to them. The striving for excellence seems to carry with it a hope of personal fulfilment and when that personal ambition coincides with the needs of others, carries with it a hope for the progression of all of us and 'twice affirmation' for the individual.*
>
> *I believe people (young and old) grow their understandings and create valued knowledge through dialogue with themselves and others.*

How does this insight help me to improve what I am doing? An answer to that question only evolved slowly in the course of my doctoral research as I adopted Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development.

Implications of educational psychologists adopting Living Educational Theory Research as continuing professional development

As my practice is educational, I need to evolve an educational methodology to research into it to improve it. Dadds et al. (2001) refer to this as methodological inventiveness. They point out that how practitioners choose to research, and their sense of control over this, can be as important to their sense of identity within the research as their research outcomes: "No methodology is, or should be, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques" (p. 169).

A research methodology also reflects the researcher's values and beliefs and shapes the question as much as the answers which emerge.

Living Educational Theory Research is a form of professional practitioner self-study educational research. It serves well to answer questions concerned with enhancing educational influences in the learning of social formations and those who comprise them. As the researcher researches into questions of the form, 'how can I improve the process of education here?' they generate values-based explanations for their educational influence in learning, their own, other people's and of social formations (Whitehead, 1989a, 1989b, 2018). They do this by clarifying their values, as they emerge and evolve through their research. These values form their explanatory principles and standards of judgement in valid accounts of their practice. The values are those that are life-affirming and life-enhancing, and, as Crompton (2010) describes, are a "better source of motivation for engaging in bigger-than-self problems than other values" (p. 9).

Living-educational-theories are:

> *... the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live. I usually call such explanations living-educational-theories to distinguish the explanations created by individual practitioner-researchers from the explanations derived from theories of education (Whitehead, 1989). In the creation of a living-educational-theory an individual explains their present practice and influence in terms of an evaluation of the past and an intention to create something better in the future that has yet to be realised in practice. (Whitehead, 2011, p. 4)*

This quotation brings together key distinguish features of Living Educational Theory Research and shows an internal consistency to expressions of inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian values which is missing in other work, as illustrated by Pring (2000):

> *One remains ignorant and powerless unless, through learning, one acquires the concepts and knowledge which dispel that ignorance and enable one to understand oneself and others, and one's obligations and responsibilities. Learning is essential to becoming fully a person. Through learning one acquires the ideals which ennoble and motivate, the standards by which one might evaluate one's own performances and those of others. Adolescence, in particular, is a period in which young people seek to find their distinctive identities – the sort of persons they are or might become, the ideals that are worth striving for, the qualities that they wish to be respected for, the talents that need to be developed, the kind of relationship in which they will find enrichment, the style of life that is worth pursuing. (p. 19)*

A Living Educational Theory Researcher goes further as they:
–   Accept responsibility for their practice and researching into it to improve it
–   Research to understand, improve and explain their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations
–   Recognise that their educational influence comes from the expression of their embodied knowledge and values
–   Identify where and how they are a living contradiction in their practice, and/or living a contradiction in terms of their life-affirming and life-enhancing values, to improve their practice
–   Clarify and evolve their embodied knowledge and values. Values are understood to be those energy-flowing values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing and give meaning and purpose to life the researcher's life and work
–   Evaluate and offer a theory to account for their practice with their values as living standards of judgement and explanatory principles
–   Draw on the knowledge created and offered by others, for instance in the various disciplines or other fields of enquiry, to enhance their research-practice
–   Create and offer reasoned and reasonable accounts as valid educational explanations of educational influence in learning
–   Offer multimedia narratives to communicate the relationally dynamic nature of energy-flowing values

In conclusion

To summarise, I understand educational research and practice to be a values-led, creative process, where exploration, questions and responses are dynamically interrelated and offer generative and transformational possibilities. It is the practitioner-researchers' values, beliefs, theories and practice, as well as their activities that are researched. The knowledge generated contributes to a new, educational epistemology that was called for by Schön (1995).

How you look at things, the stories you tell yourself to describe and explain what happens in your life, and your ability to recognise and generatively transform your narratives, and your embedded and embodied theories, seem to be key to living a life which contributes to your own sense of well-being and well-becoming and that of others.

The acquisition of skills, information, or whatever competences or even confidence is needed seems to be the secondary problem. It is finding your dream and passion and being prepared to commit time, energy and yourself to realising them that seems to be key. There are many accounts of people who have found ways round, over or through difficulties, learnt skills they never previously thought they could, found the resources they lacked and found ways of dealing with their personal demons when they have that distant focus held clearly and resolutely.

The possibility of understanding in practice, more about what influences learning and the influential stories that we each tell to account for our lives has kept me enthralled with psychology and education. I want to open people of all ages

to possibilities they might want to explore and to enable them to develop enthusiasms, skills and understandings, which will enable them to become self-developing. That is why I think it important not to just enable others, of all ages, to create their living-educational-theory accounts but to enable them to learn how to create them for themselves. I want to stimulate imaginations and the desire and ability of others to improve their own educational influence in their own learning. This is problematic because sometimes people will only venture along a path they have already trodden. Surely helping people learn to venture along such paths with educational intent should be something an educational psychology could contribute to.

> *Working as a senior educational psychologist responsible for implementing policy on high ability learning, I experienced the following concerns: Practice, theory and research often appeared to lose connection with the purpose of education; Theory and practice appeared to be developed independently, and without explanation or evaluation related to values of education; Those involved with education appeared to be in discrete worlds, each vying to exert their hegemony over the totalising development of educational theory, practice and provision. (Huxtable, 2012, p. 15)*

I continue to have such concerns and am committed to continuing to research into ways forward and contributing to international discourses to improve the development of professional educational psychological theory and practice.

Employing a Living Educational Theory Research approach to my continuing professional development has not only enabled me to progress, it has maintained my motivation to employ myself to continue working to realise my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility and inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values in practice. It has enabled me to recognise the beliefs on which my work rests. I believe that each person is capable of:
–   Being an expert in their own learning and enhancing their expertise;
–   Developing and offering talents as life-enhancing gifts;
–   Creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, of themselves, and of themselves in and of the world, as a gift, to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others;
–   Coming to know and evolve their own living-educational-theory

A Living Educational Theory Research approach to professional development is a continuous process. It has helped me to understand that as an educational professional I account to others: to the ethical standards of my professional body; to my employer/community, and, most importantly, I hold myself to account to me, and to my own values.

Sachs (2001) describes the impact on educators and Education in Australia of politically directed changes. She shows the influence of a shift from, what she refers to as 'democratic professionalism', to 'managerialist

professionalism' with the emergence of an 'entrepreneurial identify'. Her reference to experiences of New Zealand in the late 1980's serves to reemphasise that the current social and political upheaval and contradictions, being experienced in England decades later, is not a new phenomenon.

The result is not just increased workloads for everyone who works in Education. Stress is created by the demand for compliance with practice that is not values-led, and neither affirms or enhances talents as gifts, expertise or knowledge, created and offered by those with the courage to try. This holds true for children and young persons as much as for adults. Finding, or at least knowing, there are fellow travellers helps people to face these demands and find ways of still being true to humanitarian, life-enhancing values. Einstein (1932) (reputedly) expressed this beautifully:

> *Although I am a typical loner in my daily life, my awareness of belonging to the invisible community of those who strive for truth, beauty, and justice has prevented me from feelings of isolation.*

You might see some members of such an 'invisible' community living and working in more than 15 different countries by visiting the living-posters homepage which can can be accessed from https://www.actionresearch.net.

Professional educational practitioners worldwide have confronted these issues by successfully employing a Living Educational Theory Research approach to their continuing professional development. The numerous doctorates that can be found on https://actionresearch.net/ and papers published in the Educational Journal of Living Theories, accessible freely from https://ejolts.net/, provide evidence to support my claim.

I conclude with an invitation to you to test for yourself:

–   That employing a Living Educational Theory Research approach to your continuing professional development can enable you to improve your practice as an educational psychologist and realise your responsibilities as a member of the profession, as a member of the social formations within which you practice and as a member of Humanity, a global social formation that transcends time and place.
–   Making public accounts of your Living Educational Theory Research can contribute to Educational Psychology developing to meet the challenges, choices and changes of a 21 st century world and bring into being a world in which Humanity flourishes.

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