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Review of Marie Huxtable's doctoral thesis, 'How do I evolve living-educational-theory praxis in living-boundaries?'

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This thesis offers four original contributions to knowledge:

1. Living-Educational-Theory praxis, highlighting the fundamental importance of educators creating 'values-based explanation of their educational influences in learning' (Whitehead, 1989), as they research to develop praxis within living-boundaries.
2. Living-boundaries as co-creative space within which energy-flowing values can be clarified and communicated.
3. Inclusive gifted and talented education developed from an educational perspective, which enables each learner to develop and offer talents, expertise and knowledge as life-affirming and life-enhancing gifts. The knowledge is that created of the world, of self, and self in and of the world.
4. Living-Theory TASC, a relationally-dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis, which integrates Living-Theory (Whitehead, 1989) with Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC) (Wallace & Adams, 1993).

Huxtable uses a multimedia narrative to clarify and communicate the meanings of the embodied expressions of her personal ontological and social values. The personal values focus on a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility. The social values focus on an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society. The meanings are clarified as they emerge within living-boundaries through the evolution of Huxtable's living-theory praxis. They form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in her claim to know her educational influences. The epistemological

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significance of these living standards of judgment is that they are relationally dynamic and show how her inclusive and living logic can hold together ideas from the most advanced social theories of the day, whether these are communicated within propositional or dialectical traditions.

The fourth original claim to knowledge integrates Living Theory with an action research cycle of Thinking Actively in a Social Context. Huxtable represents this relationship as a Living Theory TASC Knot and writes:

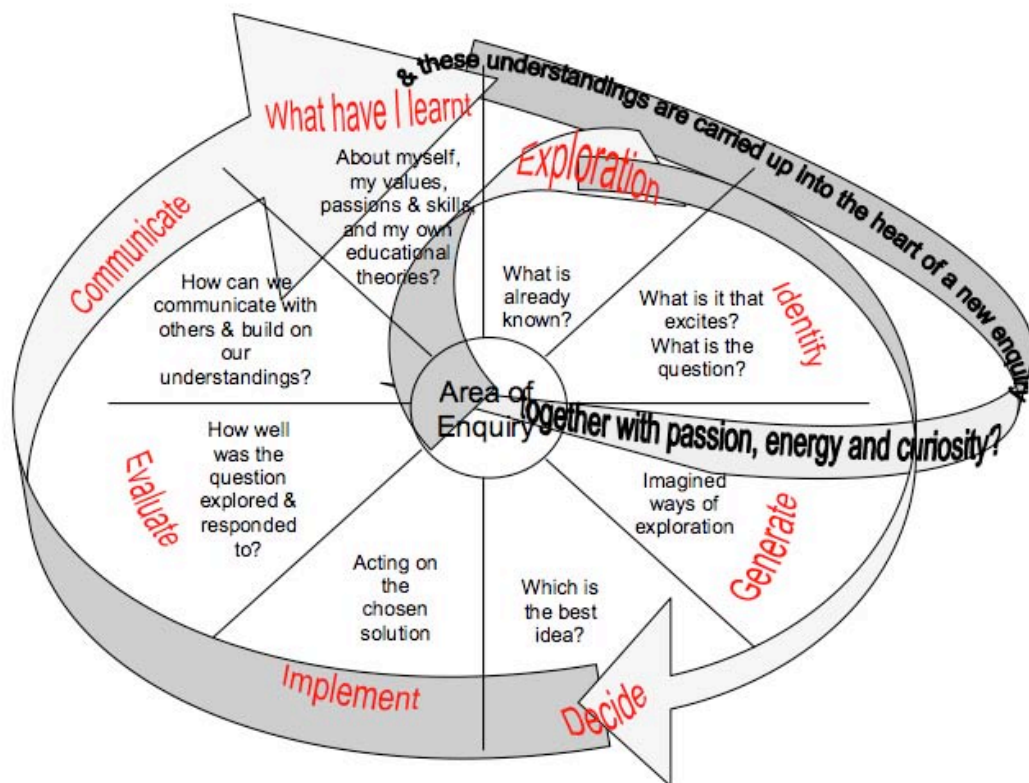


Figure 1 Living Theory TASC Knot (Huxtable, 2008)

But Living Theory research constitutes far more than the systematic phase of enquiry. The stories in the narrative of improving practice to be told are arrived at through an organic process, birthed and evolved through flowing, complex interconnecting relationships and experiences, between learners and educators as they enquire together.

In the organic phase of Living Theory TASC I may at various times, or at the same time, be gathering and organising what is known in the field, implementing a plan of action, or clarifying my concern. I may use qualitative and quantitative methods developed by social scientists, and draw on theories and knowledge developed by academics and practitioners in various fields and disciplines. What I use and draw on is influenced by whether it helps me understand and improve what I am doing. In bringing TASC and Living Theory together, I sought to describe a research method that holds together the organic and systematic phases of educational research in a relationally-dynamic multidimensional manner and connects

research to create knowledge of the world, with educational research to create knowledge of self and self in and of the world.

Living Theory TASC is relationally-dynamic and multidimensional, within phases and between phases. In the systematic phase, the work does not go clockwise round the 'wheel', even when creating an account. This thesis is testament to what I mean. For instance, in the process of trying to produce an account that might communicate to you, I have organised and reorganised the material and reorganised it again as new learning emerges.

This living-theory thesis could be useful to those of us who, like Huxtable, experience the following concerns:

Practice, theory and research often appear to lose connection with the purpose of education; Theory and practice appear 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's thesis can also be understood as a contribution to the ecologies of knowledges described by de Sousa Santos (2014).



Video 1: Marie Huxtable introducing her thesis.

<https://youtu.be/re91A2EaVAQ>

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