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Educational Journal of Living Theories

Editorial Foreword

Marie Huxtable & Jack Whitehead

As we write this editorial in December 2020 the world continues to reel from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though vaccines are starting to be used it is likely to be well into 2021 before the beneficial influences will be felt throughout the world. The introduction to the June 2020 issue of EJOLTS on <https://ejolts.net/node/352> continues to be relevant to our 13(2) issue:

“This issue of EJOLTS has been published at a moment in time when we are experiencing a pandemic, COVID-19. Around the globe people are being placed in 'lockdown', which individuals are experiencing in different ways; some with a sense of isolation from humans, other animals and nature, others with a sense of developing new connections within their local communities... A question that is common to those engaged in Living Educational Theory research and publishing in EJOLTS is, 'how do we improve our practice as global citizens as our individual and collective contributions to bringing into being a world of human flourishing?'”

What constitutes Living Educational Theory research and an individual's living-educational-theory research has been well established and the distinction an individual's living-educational-theory, and 'living theory', has been made clear (see for example Whitehead, 2018). This is reflected in the development of the EJOLTS review processes to be educational in the course of preparing papers to meet the highest academic, intellectual and scholarly standards. The first stage is a double blind review by reviewers and the Editorial Board to establish whether or not a paper:

- Is of an academic and scholarly quality appropriate for an academic journal;
- Includes distinguishing qualities of a Living Educational Theory research methodology and/or makes a contribution to the field of Living Educational Theory research.

Papers that pass the double blind review stage progress to the open review stage conducted in the web space of cooperation on moodle (access from <http://ejolts.org/>). In the open review stage a team of reviewers help the author/s create a paper to the point that the reviewers consider it meets all the publishing criteria and they recommend the Editorial Board consider accepting for publication. Communication between reviewers and authors is transparent and our readers are also able to participate by reading and contributing to the conversation. (Full details can be accessed from <https://ejolts.net/submission>). The Editorial Board then makes a final decision as to whether to publish using the same criteria.

In the process of creating EJOLTs papers for publication its reach extends beyond that of the enhancing the educational influence in the learning of the authors. It includes the international team of reviewers who are practicing in diverse cultures and sites of practice. In the open review space, and when it is archived post publication, general readers are also afforded the opportunity to learn from the conversations.

Authors of this issue include those working in New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Canada and Bangladesh and reviewers working in Australia, Italy, UK, Hawaii, Ireland and Nepal. You can see in the papers in this issue how each has engaged with a common purpose, while giving their unique interpretation in practice to create answers to the question, 'how do we improve our practice as global citizens as our individual and collective contributions to bringing into being a world of human flourishing?'

Neil Boland in his paper, *'Lived spirituality: Exploring the richness of inner work'*, investigates and documents the inner processes which underlie and support his professional life – a living-educational-theory based on what Boland terms 'lived spirituality'. Boland explains how he has been influenced by the work of Rudolf Steiner and deepens and extends his idea of 'lived spirituality' from the 2017 paper he wrote with his Hawaiian colleague, Jocelyn Dembirag, *'(Re)inhabiting Waldorf Education: Honolulu Teachers Explore the Notion of Place'* (<https://ejolts.net/node/309>).

Boland draws insights from personal experience and personal knowledge gained over a period of many years practice and research as a professional educator, along with past and present influences, both theoretical and philosophical. In considering his lived spirituality, Boland outlines the benefits he has experienced from his regular practice of inner work and engaging in Living Educational Theory research. This has enhanced his cognitive range and concern by including insights from the ideas of others. The ideas he draws on include Foucault's work on the care of the self, 'parrhesia' and 'askesis' and Deleuze's notion of the rhizome as a metaphor.

Neema Parekh in her paper, *'A Culture of Reflection: How my living-educational-theory enabled me to transform the teaching-learning attitude in my school.'* shares a narrative of her educational journey in which she generates her living-educational-theory research account from within her Indian site of practice. Parekh focuses on the process of being accountable to living her values as fully as possible in her professional practice as head-teacher. This includes her belief that primary school teachers and students are key people who can transform society. Parekh describes the establishment of a 'culture of reflection' in order to develop more democratic ways for teachers and students to work together so values of human flourishing could be lived as fully as possible. Parekh designed her educational projects in a way that stressed that teachers and students had to negotiate

first to initiate democratic teaching and learning processes to empower teachers and students to be able to generate knowledge independently. Parekh also offers her insights into what sustained her motivation over a prolonged period of time.

Parekh analyses the implications of acting on her belief that a democratic and negotiated learning environment fosters accountability with values of human flourishing. Parekh inquires, as head-teacher, with teachers and students in Lavad Primary School during the years 2015 to 2019. She describes how reflective practices enabled her to address the contradictions in her values and allowed her to put together creative solutions to avoid acts of autocracy. The experience of living-contradictions is a common experience reported by Living Educational Theory researchers so Parekh's creative solutions are likely to be of interest to all readers of EJOLTS. Parekh is the first to have her paper published in both English and Gujarati.

Abdul Hameed Panhwar in his paper, *'Improving ESL Teaching and Learning Through Living Educational Theory Research at the University Level'* gives an account of how he used Living Educational Theory research to improve his English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher. He reports on his classroom-based, action-research study conducted in a University in Pakistan, in a compulsory language support classes. Panhwar embarked on this study with the intention of finding a solution to the problem he encountered. His problem was that the majority of his students were not autonomous or motivated and did not actively engage with the learning process in his classes. He was concerned that as a consequence they may fail to make satisfactory progress with their language learning.

In his account of his living-educational-theory research Panhwar explains how he improved the classroom context with his students and colleagues. In his situational analysis and intervention Panhwar used a highly structured approach to group work. This involved developing permanent groups and cooperative learning activities. Panhwar's interventions were focused on helping students to increase their motivation and engagement in English language support classes at University level. Panhwar provides the evidence to support his claim that engaging in Living Educational Theory research was an effective methodological approach for improving his academic practices and student autonomy, motivation and engagement with English as a Second Language learning activities.

Jackie Delong In her paper, *'Raising Voices Using Dialogue as a Research Method for Creating living-educational-theories in Cultures of Inquiry'*, provides an evidence-based argument that dialogue, as a research method, can be used to describe and explain the nature of her educational influence in learning and what she calls her 'dialogic way of being' and 'loving educational conversations'. She also describes some of the obstacles and constraints of using dialogue as a research method. Delong provides evidence of her work, in raising the voices of some of those she has worked with internationally, to help them develop their living-educational-theory research and extend her post-doctoral work on 'cultures of inquiry'.

Faria Tofail in her paper, *'A journey to the centre' – exploring action research to explain my emerging living-educational-theory and my work to empower local practitioners in policy and practice in Bangladesh'*, focuses on a study conducted in Bangladesh for her doctoral research. This was carried out with university teachers in a policy context of the introduction of a 'Communicative approach to English Language Teaching'. The cultural

context included the dissatisfaction of different stakeholders, particularly teachers, with curricular reform that was not resulting in learners' 'increased proficiency'. Tofail found that a key reason, typically given in the literature, for the lack of learners' 'increased proficiency', was 'teacher resistance'. This was perceived by those who developed strategies at government level as teachers' unwillingness to incorporate communicative principles in their teaching. Tofail focuses on the consensus, in the international academic literature, concerning the efficacy of teacher-research to improve practice whilst recognising that what practitioners, from postcolonial communities actually say about the efficacy of teacher-teacher, has remained considerably under-reported. Hence, Tofail initiated an exciting project with colleagues. The aim was to explore whether researching collaboratively promoted a better understanding of teachers' beliefs and policy reforms and enabled them to make informed choices by devising context-sensitive pedagogies in their teaching-learning contexts.

Having successfully concluding her doctoral research Tofail developed her living-educational-theory research to clarify her previously unarticulated values, and to understand, improve and explain her educational influence in her own learning, the learning of those she worked with on her project and the learning of the governmental departments responsible for developing and implementing strategies to improve English learning in Bangladesh. She reanalyzed the data she had gathered in the process of initiating and facilitating a collaborative action research project with her colleagues and critically reflected on her own beliefs, practices and lived experiences as an ELT practitioner. Tofail concludes her paper with her intentions to enhance her educational influence in the learning of social formations, such as the private university she worked for, together with some recommendations for the educational policies of the Bangladesh government.

We hope that as you read these papers you not only creatively and critically engage with them to help you progress your own research but will feel inspired to engage in developing your living-educational-theory research account to understand, improve and explain, 'how do I improve my practice as a global citizen as my contribution to bringing into being a world of human flourishing?' and submit your paper to EJOLTs and so add to a global educational knowledge-base for the benefit of all.

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