

As Educators and Educational Researchers, What Contribution Has a Living Educational Theory Approach Made to Helping Us to Improve the Quality of Our Practice and Our Lives?

Cathy Griffin & Jacqueline Delong

Cathy Griffin

*Elementary School
Principal, Bluewater
District School Board,
Canada*

Jacqueline Delong

*International Mentor,
Canada*

ORCID iD
[https://orcid.org/
0000-0002-2408-0143](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2408-0143)

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Abstract

In this article, two practitioner-researchers, Cathy, principal of a rural elementary school and Jackie, retired superintendent of education and adjunct professor now international mentor, collaborate to share the ways in which Living Educational Theory has helped them improve their practice and transform their lives. Their argument is that subsequent to first engaging in describing and explaining the nature of their influence on themselves, on others and on social formations using their values as explanatory principles, the process has become their ontology and epistemology, their 'way of living/life'. Their learning has been in an educational relationship over 13 years.

Cathy builds educational relationships and studies her influence on their learning and practice. She allows them to find something of use in her practice, to see themselves in her story, her struggle, her journey. Living Educational Theory has become her way of being and leading, inspiring her to live with more love, joy, trust and authenticity.

Living according to her value of 'loving into learning', Jackie, with the help of the practitioner-researchers with whom she has worked, has refined her understandings of building 'cultures of inquiry' to include democratic evaluation, vulnerability, 'dialogue and digital visual data as research methods' with life-affirming energy-flowing values.

Keywords: Living Educational Theory; culture of inquiry; dialogue as research method; mentoring; practitioner-research.

Introduction: Framing the paper

In this article, we collaborate to share our educational relationship over 13 years and the ways in which Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1989) has helped us to improve our practice and transform our lives. As we each created our own living-educational-theories and explained the nature of our influence on ourselves, on others and on social formations using our values as explanatory principles, working to live according to our values has become our ontology and epistemology, our 'way of living/life'.

Cathy: In making transparent my efforts to improve my own practice to those in my immediate sphere of influence, I have built educational relationships and studied my influence on their learning and practice. I intend that they will find something of use in my practice, to see themselves in my story, my struggle, my journey. Living Educational Theory has become my way of being and leading, inspiring me to live with more love, joy, trust and authenticity.

Jackie: Having been engaged in Living Educational Theory research for over 25 years, I have continuously researched my practice and supported others in Canada and across the globe as a teacher and mentor. Living according to my value of 'loved into learning' (Campbell, 2011) with the help of the practitioner-researchers with whom I have worked, I have refined my understandings of building 'cultures of inquiry' to include democratic evaluation, vulnerability, 'dialogue and digital visual data as research methods' with life-affirming energy-flowing values.

The format for the paper was our first challenge to sharing our research. As we talked on Microsoft Teams and email over a period of a week or so, through examining our dialogue and visual data, we came to the realization that a traditional research paper format would not serve us or our readers well. Like Buber, we want to be speaking directly to you so that you feel the need for a response:

We must learn to feel addressed by a book, by the human being behind it, as if a person spoke directly to us. A good book or essay or poem is not primarily an object to be put to use, or an object of experience: it is the voice of You speaking to me, requiring a response. (Buber, 1970, p. 39)

In our first dialogue about the paper, Jackie supported Cathy in thinking about the focus of her contribution to the paper. In the short video clip below, Jackie describes her intent in this joint work to create a collaborative inquiry with and for Cathy; Cathy describes how that is working well for her and Jackie stresses that Cathy needs to say when it is not working. Through this and other conversations in this paper, their co-learning is evident as well as Jackie's role as mentor and experienced Living Educational Theory action researcher and Cathy's excitement about researching own practice, "I'm not doing my practice to do a research paper; I'm doing this research as a practitioner."



Video 1. Cathy and Jackie discuss their article and roles 170121
https://youtu.be/f8Z4_6RRF4Y (DeLong, 2021)

After reflecting on this Teams meeting, we made the decision through email dialogue:

Cathy: Jackie, I really would like the structure of this paper to be a reflection of our dialogic research relationship. Can we change the format of the paper to be a dialogue between the two of us? The Living Educational Theory approach (Whitehead, 1989) has helped each of us improve our practice and enhance our lives. But it has done so within the context of relationships – not just yours and mine, but for the purposes of this paper, ours is the relationship we are focusing on.

As Williamson and Whitehead (2021) describe, I have “semi-structured interviews with 'my I'.” and I do spend time reflecting in isolation asking myself questions. But my research is punctuated by very important, rich interviews or real-time validation sessions with you and other validators rather than only the validation from the literature of others. The transcripts of OUR conversations are the backbone of my reflective practice in which I sift through my ideas and try out arguments.

Jackie: Hi, Cathy. I have reread your note this morning. I think you are right on. My dialogic way of being, using visual data and dialogue as research methods have been critical to our relationship and my/your/our research. (DeLong, 2021b, personal email, 18/01/21)

In this we show the educational influence of a Living Educational Theory methodology as we explore the possible form of this paper as an account of our inquiry. Through our dialogic ways of being, we intend to share with you our ‘culture of inquiry’ (DeLong, 2013) in which we have used our energy-flowing values as standards of judgement for explaining the nature of our educational influence on ourselves, on others and on social formations where we live and work. As we progressed with writing, we realized that in an action-reflection cycle, we needed to make additional comments on our re-thinking on the dialogue and integrate the counsel we have received from our authors group with whom we worked and reviewers to strengthen our argument and thus we added a third voice that we have called ‘Reflection’. The reflections of reviewers, editors (Moirá Laidlaw (ML), Peter Mellett (PM) or ourselves, Cathy (CG), Jackie (JD) are identified as follows:

Reflection (Blind Reviewer):

Sometimes I get the impression... that [the paper] is more about how you are writing rather than what you are writing about.

Reflection (CG):

I think that is precisely the point we are trying to make. Our dialogic process, our recording, transcribing, analysis and reflection of our dialogues is our research **and** our writing process. So how we are writing this paper, this multimedia paper itself, is a representation of our living-educational-theories in action. This is the Eureka moment for us as writers – our discovery of how we can get closer to authentically sharing what we do and how we interact within an academic paper. These reflections are important to include separately from the ‘framing’ of the paper because they represent the influence our dialogue has had on others or on ourselves.

Reflection (JD):

We need to define ‘culture of inquiry’:

An explanation of this ‘culture of inquiry’ resides in Jackie’s article in the December 2013 issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS):

When I use the language of Culture of Inquiry, I am meaning the creation of a safe, supportive space where students and teachers are enabled to make explicit their values and make themselves accountable for living according to those values. They learn to recognize when they are not living according to their espoused values and are what Jack Whitehead calls living contradictions. Action-reflection cycles based on asking questions like “How can I improve my teaching of these children?” become as natural as breathing. Experiencing values such as loving kindness and loved into learning in this democratic, non-hierarchical environment and recognition of their embodied knowledge, encourage students and teachers to take responsibility for their own learning. (DeLong, 2013, p. 26)

Glenn (2021) says:

That process of slow change is reflected in papers published in EJOLTs. DeLong introduces what she terms a ‘culture of inquiry’ in a 2010 edition of EJOLTs and has developed it over time (DeLong 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2019) to the extent that ‘culture of inquiry’ has now become part of recognised terminology used with frequency in Living Theory accounts.

Once we decided on the dialogic inquiry format, we focused on developing our argument to have improved our practice and our lives providing data in digital visual data and dialogue as research methods as evidence of our claims to know. We focus on each of the following headings which emerged as we wrote the article:

- 1) Socio/cultural/historical context
 - a) Our history together
 - b) Our sites of practice
- 2) Our living-educational-theory methodologies

- 3) Educational influence of EJOLTS
 - a) Use value of the EJOLTS enterprise
 - b) Influencing and being influenced
- 4) Influence of Living Educational Theory research on selves, others and social formations
- 5) Living our energy-flowing values in our contribution to human flourishing
- 6) Next steps/going forward

1) Socio/cultural/historical Context

We begin with sharing the foundation of our relational knowing based on our history, culture and context to explain how Living Educational Theory helped us to improve the quality of our practice and our lives.

a) Our history together

Jackie:

Our relationship started in July of 2009 in the Bluewater District School Board - Brock University Master's Cohort with the curriculum based on Living Educational Theory. It was apparent to me early in the course that Cathy was very reflective and excessively humble about her embodied knowledge. As I built the culture of inquiry with the group, I could see her becoming more confident and willing to share her knowledge. In fact, it was her willingness to be vulnerable and share how being a survivor of childhood sexual abuse was affecting her practice that opened up the others to sharing their values and living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989). Cathy's Master's project (Griffin, 2011) that I supervised is scholarly, insightful and authentic.

Our work together continued when Cathy and Liz Campbell co-created the Bluewater Action Research Network (BARN), with me as a consultant and then as a supporter. BARN sustained practitioner research in a school system over 5 years with Cathy and Liz gradually withdrawing and supporting new leaders.



Image 1: BARN Researchers 2014 (left) Cathy, Jackie and Liz facilitating 2014 (right) (Griffin, 2021)

Cathy:

Working with Jackie during my Master of Education degree was transformative. Jackie created a safe culture of inquiry within which I could look holistically at my practice as an educator and examine how who I am as a person impacts my practice and can be used to guide and evaluate my practice rather than trying to emulate the practice of others, judge

myself against others and at times try to be someone I am not. The values of vulnerability, trust and authenticity that I identified in my master's research (Griffin, 2011) continue to guide my practice.

Reflection (JD):

This is the ontological significance of a personal living-educational-theory. It relates to Glenn's (2021) paper in terms of her own ontological standard of judgements for her paper, "One of the living standards of judgement I hold around social justice is in terms of being accountable for establishing a learning environment for people who see themselves as capable of developing their potential as learners who take responsibility for their learning."

There was one moment in Jackie's practice as our professor that changed my educational practice forever. In front of the whole master's class, she stated her intentions and asked for feedback on whether her practice was living up to her intentions.

Reflection (JD):

"Or, in other words, was I a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989)?"

She asked us to give her critical feedback to help her improve her practice. In that moment, my practice as an educator and leader was changed forever. I could see that by being open and intentionally vulnerable in engaging others in my quest to improve my practice I could make it easier for them to take the risk to do the same with theirs. Liz Campbell (2019) described how we used this model facilitating the Bluewater Action Research Network and I described its use in my work with my students (Griffin, 2013).

In the following video Jackie shows the process she created where the students in her master's classroom give her critical feedback on her teaching of them and how she might improve. (DeLong & Whitehead, 2011).



Video 2: Democratic Evaluation Bluewater March 5, 2010
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SShZFmETpkk> (DeLong, 2011)

Reflection (JD):

Through our relationship and dialogue, Cathy has helped me learn about myself, about my influence on myself and others and about refining and deepening my understandings. Since she is so skilled in technology, I have learned how to access and interpret the digital visual data much more efficiently. Through her research (Griffin, 2011; 2013), I have deepened my understandings of “cultures of inquiry”, recognized the importance of vulnerability through “democratic evaluation”, and been inspired by the significance of young students conducting their own values-based research.

Our history includes our experiences in sharing our knowledge in the 2013 special issue of EJOLTS (Campbell et al, 2013; Delong et al, 2013, Whitehead, 2013; Delong, 2013; Griffin, 2013; Campbell, 2013). In the foreword of that issue, Moira Laidlaw (2013) wrote:

The result of this complex development of relationships has resulted in what is to my mind both a highly meaningful step for each author in the explanation of their own living theories, and possible a leap for Living Theory itself. The one and the many are both perfectly at home here, and both are enhanced through the other.(p. vi)

b) Our sites of practice**Jackie:**

I am a mentor to “living global citizens” (Coombs, Potts & Whitehead, 2014; Potts, 2014; Potts, 2019) in places like USA, Nepal and India (Vaughan & Delong, 2019; Dhungana, 2012; Mishra, 2021). This is my form of “learning with a life-affirming energy and values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity” (Whitehead 2018, p. 7). If I can support these practitioner-researchers to create their own living-educational-theories by creating cultures of inquiry, I hope to inspire them to encourage and support others in their contexts to live their values more fully in their practice and inspire others to do the same. It is important to note that the role of mentor helps me improve my practice in a co-learning context (Nyanjom, 2020, p. 243) as “a mentor helps the person under his or her care to see beyond oneself and become more fully human. At the same time, mysteriously, the mentor is being helped to fulfill further his or her own human potential.” (Yamamoto, 1988, p. 188) Being seen in an affirming way is essential for the mentees’ learning and, indeed, for us all.

Cathy:

I am a principal of a rural K-8 school in southwestern Ontario. Learning with and for students and teachers energizes me. In my transition to administration, it is still a work in progress to lead inquiries or mentor others in a way that aligns with my own values. My main focus has been on mathematics, a provincial direction with funding for teacher research.

In the next part, the use of dialogue and visual data in our living-educational-theory methodologies is our means of using our values as standards of judgement to explain the improvement in the quality of our practice and lives.

2. Our living-educational-theory Methodologies

Our living-educational-theories are our ‘way of living/life’ over time, past, present and future. By using “dialogue and digital visual data as research methods” (DeLong, 2020) in

the creation of our living-educational-theory methodology, we are living “methodological inventiveness” (Dadds & Hart, 2001) and being true to our values. In our dialogic space, we have created a culture of inquiry as Cathy articulates in the video clip below:



Video 3: Cathy Griffin and Jackie Delong in a culture of inquiry
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEoc-rNG4xE> (DeLong, 2019)

In the clip, Cathy shares her mentoring of a teacher who is struggling to keep the attention of her students in Math class with the suggestion that she use the video camera as another pair of eyes. After reviewing the video of her teaching, the teacher is enabled to see that her mastery of the lesson plan is inhibiting her from keeping the focus on the students. This one strategy facilitated improvement: Cathy’s support of learning in the school and the teacher’s learning and teaching.

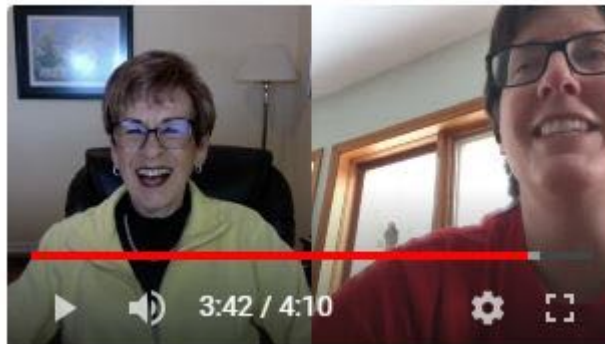
In an email (150619), Cathy Griffin, described a living culture of inquiry in her response to our Skype conversation:

A Skype session with you is a reflective, research space for me. I automatically prepare for a conversation by returning to my values and examining what I am doing in my work and my life. I enter the conversation knowing that you will be a loving listener with concern for my health and well-being above all. I also enter the conversation knowing that, as an astute LET (Living Educational Theory) researcher, you will help me identify and clarify important points in my journey to improving what I am doing and will validate or question the claims I make about my practice. That sounds so technical and 'researchy'. But the reality is much different than that because of the love that underpins the relationship and because of the loving actions you make in line with your values. For example, in the clip above, you honour my time more than once by checking if my household is getting up and needs my attention... You voice your love at the end of each email and voice call. It may seem trite to an onlooker, but it is foundational to the work we do together. The unconditional love is an example of your values in action (ontology) and your intentional creation of a space in which it is safe to do Living Educational Theory action research. (DeLong, 2019a, personal email)

Reflection (JD):

Clear evidence of Cathy’s influence on my understanding of a culture of inquiry. Reflection (CG and JD): We hope that you feel the loving nature of our relationship, and its nurturing qualities as an educational influence and its link to the overall standards of judgement for this special issue. We find links with Rawal’s (2021) paper for this issue in her loving enthusiasm which is apparent in her paper and motivates others.

In this video clip, we discuss our process of using dialogue and visual data as research method:



Video 4: Using video recording data https://youtu.be/zYBhHXH_n28 (Griffin, 2021a)

Cathy:

Traditionally, we talk about the process of identifying living contradictions in our own practice and then setting out some ways to get past that living contradiction and live more in line with our values. Then we engage in successive action-reflection cycles and make claims at the end about what we think we've learned from the process. We back that up with evidence.

We use video throughout the process to capture our actions and the conversations with validation groups in which we review our claims to know and our evidence for claims. The video below shows how you can scrub through quickly to identify body language and points at which you know you're really excited and passionate. These indicate we are living according to our values. Alternatively, body language can tell us something important is going on. There is a section in which I look very closed off because I was having difficulty in trusting myself – it was indication of me not living according to my values or a living contradiction.

Jackie:

Definitely. Well, I think we need to talk about the specifics in terms of the transcription. It takes some time to deal with readability because people don't want to read the um's and ah's and repetitions and there's fidelity to intent even if not the actual words.

Cathy:

Right, but for this paper, our process is different. Because our purpose in this paper is to review the impact Living Educational Theory has had on our lives and our practice, rather than combing through our past papers, videos and research to find our claims to know, we are beginning by recording conversations about each section of the paper.

Reflection (CG):

Below is the video clip referred to in the dialogue above. It illustrates how I use video in my research. At 1:38, the 'closed off' body language is apparent.



Video 5: Cathy's Validation Group <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pvea2SfEovw>
(Griffin, 2021b)

Reflection (JD):

In the sense of meaning making on another level, we seem to be conducting a meta-analysis of our processes and feel a link to Williamson and Whitehead's paper (2021). Our examination of our own processes and making that a subject of the paper we're producing as we're producing it, seems highly original.

Using dialogue and digital visual data as research methods (DeLong, 2020) is natural for us and essential to sharing our embodied knowledge. On the topic of evolutions in the Living Educational Theory field, Glenn (2021) says:

Similar evolutions can be seen in the field of dialogue...DeLong's (2020) paper has now taken these elements under critical scrutiny and clarified dialogue as a fundamental research tool for Living Theory research and other forms of action research too.

The process includes:

1. Recording the dialogue on SKYPE, Zoom or Teams,
2. Downloading the transcript
3. Identifying the speaker and improving the readability of the dialogue
4. Selecting the relevant sections for the point being made,
5. Trimming the video clips
6. Storing them in Stream or YouTube
7. Locating the video clip within the argument of the paper
8. Inserting the video clip and transcription in the paper
9. Reviewing our transcripts for triangulation of claims to know.

Our methodological inventiveness derived from the use of dialogue and digital visual data as research method and drawing from a variety of methodologies including narrative inquiry, self-study, and action research, has evolved during the course of our research over time and in the writing of this paper. In terms of validation, we submitted our interpretations of our valid explanations of educational influences in learning "to a validation group to receive the benefit of the mutual, rational controls of the inter-subjective criticism

of others (Popper, 1975, p. 44).” (Whitehead, 2008, p. 110). We are deeply indebted to our fellow authors and particularly, our editors, Laidlaw and Mellett, who judged our article using the four criteria of social validity proposed by Habermas (1976), to strengthen the personal and social validity of Living Educational Theories using comprehensibility, truthfulness, rightness and authenticity of the explanation. We recognize that we as “knowers/subjects are fallible, that our criteria are corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that our standards are socially constructed, and thus continually in need of critique and reconstruction. (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.7).

We would like our article to be accessible to a wide audience, to speak directly to you, our reader, be readerly, be a good conversation (Gumede & Mellett, 2019) and enjoyable, bring joy. We think this is the essence of Living Educational Theory and our own living-educational-theories. Now we intend to discuss the educational influence of EJOLTS on our lives and its use-value.

3. Educational Influence of EJOLTS

a) Use value of the EJOLTS enterprise

Despite the negative implication of questions like, “What use has all this work in EJOLTS been?”, we feel that this work has the highest form of use value. We draw on Richard Bernstein's (1971) book on Praxis and Action, about some of Marx's unpublished notes on ‘use value’ written in 1944:

Suppose we had produced things as human beings: in his production each of us would have twice affirmed himself and the other.

In my production I would have objectified my individuality and its particularity, and in the course of the activity I would have enjoyed an individual life, in viewing the object I would have experienced the individual joy of knowing my personality as an objective, sensuously perceptible, and indubitable power.

In your satisfaction and your use of my product I would have had the direct and conscious satisfaction that my work satisfied a human need, that it objectified human nature, and that it created an object appropriate to the need of another human being. (p. 48)

In our work together we have “twice affirmed” ourselves as individuals and as others in terms of our relational and dialogic ways of being and through our products of creating our own living-educational theories and methodologies and sharing them through EJOLTS publications and we have been “affirmed in each other’s thoughts and love”. We see the significance of Richard Peter’s (1966) concept of “extending cognitive range and concern” in our work in helping others to understand the nature of their values and to sustain what they are doing in improving the world around them to contribute to human flourishing.

b) Influencing and being influenced

In this February 12, 2021 dialogue, we review the experience and learning from our joint presentation at 2013 AERA in San Francisco with Liz Campbell and Jack Whitehead and our writing for EJOLTS December issue (Campbell et. al, 2013).



Video 6: Making our presentation inclusive <https://youtu.be/iizYMKzfdtY> (Griffin, 2021c)

Jackie:

So, what do you remember about AERA?

Cathy:

The stark difference between presenting our paper at AERA in the traditional 'talk at' process and the ARNA round table presentation, a comfortable, dialogue-based atmosphere that inspired Liz and I to start the Bluewater Action Research Network based on your work with the Brant Action Research Network.

Jackie:

So in between there we wrote the EJOLTS special issue. Each of us had individual papers and then we did a joint paper. What influence did that have on us?

Cathy:

It gave me confidence in terms of academic writing and I felt on the inside, trying to communicate what we wanted to communicate in the way we wanted - accessible to other practitioners. It felt more about how we were writing it versus what we were saying. You?

Jackie:

I was just excited that we were all writing together. It was like we were back in the Master's Group, learning from each other, writing, sharing and getting it published, so that other people could not copy what we've done but certainly learn the process, particularly to get your voice and the students' voices heard. That was very exciting!

Cathy:

Well, it was very interesting to write together, very much like what we're doing now and what we're doing with the other writers for this issue. We're seeing how the work of others influences us and getting insight into our own process and work. The 2013 paper was my first time doing that. It was exciting. I just I remember what a great experience that was.

We now continue to generate our case that a Living Educational Theory approach has improved the quality of our practice and lives.

4. Influence of Living Educational Theory research on Selves, Others and Social formations

In this part we share the ways in which Living Educational Theory has transformed our lives. Subsequent to first engaging in describing and explaining the nature of our influence using our values as explanatory principles, over 13 years the process has become our ontology and epistemology, our 'way of living/life'. In the video clip below and the accompanying transcript, we think that you will see how Cathy builds educational relationships with others and studies her influence on their learning and practice, allowing them to find something of use in her practice, to see themselves in her story, her struggle, her journey. We also share that Jackie has continuously researched her practice and supported others across the globe as a living theory global citizen and scholar. Living according to her value of "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2011) with the help of the practitioner-researchers, she has refined her understandings of building 'cultures of inquiry' to include democratic evaluation, vulnerability, 'dialogue and digital visual data as research methods' with energy-flowing values. Within a dialectical engagement, both learn.



Video 7: Influence of Living Educational Theory research on our lives
<https://youtu.be/BK2PWYXd454> (Griffin, 2021d)

Cathy:

First, the process you took me through in our Masters of identifying my values, how I live according to my values and identifying living contradictions has become very much a part of my practice. Before, I might have thought a negative feeling meant there was something wrong with my practice. I might have moved away from it or just gone through with it and thought it's just what I have to do. I'm a teacher, this is what teachers do and I'm just not very good at it yet.

Whereas after, I could identify that a negative feeling or niggle about my practice was a living contradiction and think, "Ah! I'm not living according my values here." That negative feeling then became an opportunity for me to take action to align my practice with my values, a positive.

Reflection (PM):

It matched your values; did it also clarify and enlarge / enhance them?

Reflection in response (CG):

Yes, every time I engage in this kind of practice – living my inquiry out loud – it enhances the connection between myself and others. I learn from others and they learn from me. I am not comfortable telling teachers how to teach as I observe from my position as an administrator. I lead as a co-learner trying the math myself, experimenting with how to teach it, moderating student work together and, most importantly, I do this in front of educators and students explicitly explaining what I am doing, why I am doing it and asking for their feedback on how effective my teaching is, what they think they have learned and where we should go next.

My vulnerability creates space for teachers and students to become co-researchers in how we can all improve our practice. Grade 3 and 4 students I worked with last year became moderators of their own and other students' work posted on interactive whiteboards around the school. They helped me analyze the math and advised me which kind of questions I should post next, changing (and improving) the mathematical direction I was planning to go. By learning and changing my practice from their feedback, the students could see themselves as mathematicians, as contributing members of our culture of inquiry. This inspired me and the teachers in our work.

In the slide below from my PowerPoint reflection journal, the important part to note is that the Grade 3/4 class 'explained to me' that when doing a subtraction question, students were always using removal ($14 - 5 = ?$) as their first strategy and never using adding up ($5 + ? = 14$) as a primary strategy but rather as a way to check their removal answer of 9 ($9 + 5 = 14$).

The blue was the pre-curation training. The next day I came back and the students explained to me that I would have to use removal to find $14 - 5 = 9$ in order to use the adding up strategy starting at 9: $9 + 5 = 14$. If I started with adding up I would be going from 5 and adding 9 to get to 14.

Image 2: Students as mathematicians (Griffin, 2021e)

Jackie:

You were taking the risk and making yourself vulnerable, making your practice align with your values.

Cathy:

Exactly! Both the acceptance of those living contradictions, that feeling, and knowing that's an opportunity not something to ignore and push through doing what I think I am supposed to do. The process that you taught us, that we embraced, was to put ourselves out there and ask for critical feedback on our practice. I chose this example as the most recent pre-COVID example I have of me living my values as an educational leader.

Reflection (JD):

So, democratic evaluation is a useful method to get critique or validation for your claims to know. I hadn't seen democratic evaluation as endemic to the culture of inquiry but it bears some more thinking. Evidence of Cathy's influence on my learning.

Jackie:

Well, I mean, that's the beauty of the methodology in that you make your own living-educational-theory-methodology. That's part of it because it's a key to building relationships through vulnerability. Right?

Cathy:

Yes.

Jackie:

One of the worst things in education is we don't listen to students. How do we get better at this? And still, student voice has always been very important. Teacher voice as well. We don't make the point explicitly to ask those questions like, 'Help me do a better job of teaching you'.

Cathy:

Through your work as an international consultant, I hear you doing that – 'You need to give me feedback on whether this is working'. You are explicitly trying to make sure they are aware that they are the director.

Jackie:

Well, it's another pair of eyes. You can record it and look at it afterwards so it's like having somebody assessing your work in the room and then you can play it back and see what it is you did.

Reflection (response to PM):

We are relating to our past (as represented from an external perspective) and interacting / dialoguing with (i) the person we *see* in it and (ii) the person we *were* in it and (iii) the people we *are* now to create further / new understandings. Viewing a video with another person / co-researcher adds a further layer of generative possibility.

Cathy:

Yes, it can help me to identify the living contradictions and the practices that bring me joy, then actively seek those that enhance my enjoyment of my job and influence others by sharing my passion. During our first COVID lock down, I recorded a short video of me talking about my practice as an administrator leading a collaborative inquiry about the use of English as a Second Language observable language behaviours in kindergarten for a Ministry resource (unpublished at the time of writing). As soon as I start talking about the English Language Learners (ELLs), I light up with a big smile, my energy level is more obvious than in the rest of the video clip and in watching it myself now, I can't help smiling again as remember the joy I felt in watching the students. As I continue to describe the analysis of what I heard and saw, I am less obvious in my joy but my speech and face are still more full of joy than in other sections of the video.



Video 8: Action Research to improve our practice with Kindergarten ELLs
<https://youtu.be/p350JUNVBXs> (Griffin, 2021f)

Here are the transcriptions of those sections with the remembered joy:

At 2:01 I talk about how:

...one boy in particular was really demonstrating through his actions and through his use of 1st language (L1) with a partner that he fully understood the activity. But when we look at the words he was using in the structure of his sentence, we could see very clearly the next steps in supporting him with his language development.

At 2:25 I talk about:

...a little girl who was playing in a sort of a tent house... What I knew about her was that she wasn't communicative. She didn't speak any English to the teachers ... what I saw was her interactions with her peers and how she was playing with the tent house and I heard her practicing her English. I heard her repeating some phrases that her peers were saying and trying them out again and again. And then I heard her modify the phrase a little bit and so in doing that observation, I could really see her in action trying to learn English.

In the moment of becoming animated and in reviewing the video of me (Cathy) becoming animated, my value of the joy in learning is reinforced. I chose to include this video in the paper because when reviewing the videos in my collection, videos of me reflecting on my practice, I was surprised and delighted by the magnitude of the joy I felt

when I watched these sections. What I need to do more of in my practice is reinforced by the embodied values I perceive: Be with kids. Be with the teachers. Take the stance of the researcher asking, 'How can I improve my practice?'

Reflection (JD):

We are trying to be very explicit about the nature of our educational influence by showing the educational value of dialogue and visual data as a research method. As Bigger (2021) says, "Living Educational Theory research stands for partnership, with teachers and students combining to generate and scrutinize knowledge."

We move now to focus explicitly on our way of living/life as we are living our life-enhancing energy-flowing values in our contribution to our own and human flourishing.

5. Living our energy-flowing values in our contribution to our own and human flourishing

Following up on the above explanation, we review our meaning of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles to explain our educational influence on ourselves, on others and on social formations as we create cultures of inquiry. Given the elusive quality of energy, we share our dialogue in the video clip and transcript below where we provide data that is evidence of our claims to have improved and influenced ourselves and others:



Video 9: Living our Energy-Flowing Values <https://youtu.be/eKnZspTLpdc> (Griffin, 2021g)

Jackie:

So, let's talk about using our energy-flowing values in cultures of inquiry to contribute to human flourishing...In view of our claim at the beginning, what contribution is a Living Educational Theory research approach making to helping us to improve the quality of practice in our lives? And how has living our energy-flowing values in a culture inquiry been transformative and our contribution to human flourishing?

Reflection (JD):

The challenge is that the dominating forms of representation used in Universities and text-based media for explaining our practices and our ways of being and relating most often remove valid expressions of this energy from the explanations and cannot express adequately the embodied values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives in education. To capture the meanings of life-affirming energy and energy-flowing values such

as loved into learning, authenticity, love, and joy in explanations of educational influence, we use multi-media representations. As we explained in our 2013 EJOLTS issue:

At the heart of this epistemology are the energy-flowing values that are used as living standards of judgment. In his work on “The Energy Paradigm”, Vasilyuk (1991) pointed out that whilst we know how “energetically” a person can act when positively motivated, we have very little idea of how to link energy and motivation, energy and meaning and energy and value (p. 64) within explanations of activity. This paper demonstrates how energy-flowing values can be used as explanatory principles within explanations of influence. (Campbell *et al.*, 2013, p. 3)

Cathy:

Working with teachers and their students, engaging in helping them learn - that motivates me and gives me energy. It's the heart of my practice. So, I am influenced by using Living Educational Theory research to actively seek out those opportunities.

I am also influenced by you noticing my energy-flowing values. The first conversations you and I had about my research in my Master's course and it was like blah blah, blah, - and then I talk about something I'm really passionate about, you notice it and you say, “That's where you need to be going! That's where that energy is.” You changed the course of my research from a purely academic inquiry to an academic inquiry based on my energy-flowing values.

Then, as an educator, I, in turn had an influence on my students. I helped them identify their values and barriers to their learning. Through successive action research cycles they took action to get past those barriers until they could see and feel that energy flowing again and they were living according to their values.

Reflection (CG):

I include the video below as evidence of the work I did in my last years as a classroom teacher (Griffin, 2013). I invited students to evaluate my practice which led to them becoming researchers and evaluators of their own practice. In the video each of the students talks about the research they are immersed in. At the end of the term, I interviewed each of them about their progress and next steps and quoted their voices on each report card.



Video 10: The Living Curriculum: Student Action Research Projects (<http://youtu.be/rz2sSUEZlno>) (DeLong, 2021a)

Cathy:

Others are influenced by seeing children take action to live a better life and to improve their practice as a learner. And at the young age of 10 and 11. You have spoken of the influence these video clips had on an audience of Japanese educators, right?

Jackie:

Yes. That speaks volumes not only about the nature of your influence, but also about how you're inspiring them to take educational responsibility for their learning by doing their own research on their practice in order to improve. That's very important.

I think for me there are these moments where you can just see the person light up and you can hear them talking about what's important to them and how they're trying to live their values.

One example is Parbati Dhungana and Jackie 'loving her into learning' from Parbati's EJOLTS article, "'Living love': My living-educational- theory":

The following video shows my value as a life-affirming energy that enhanced my research practices in the second Skype conversation with Jackie on 10th January 2020.



Video 9: Love as energy. <https://youtu.be/JGgzs7YnSZQ> (Delong, 2021c)

I am so happy working with this. And I have kept aside other things and just working on it, thinking on it and trying to make like how can I improve this paper and bring it to shape so I am really feeling energetic and to be on this task so I kept this as my priority like I have kept everything aside now.

In the video I found myself so energetic. I was excited to share my living value, which has never happened before. For the first time, I felt I was listened to with a loving heart and inhabited a safe space in which I could share my vulnerability when falling from a higher stage to a lower one, and through it gathering the strength to move on. From this experience, I can claim that 'living love' refers to acting lovingly to self, others and all, as a continuous process. It is my intention to create a safe space to live out my values and let others live out their values to the fullest by negotiating and being selfless, caring, helpful, conscious and joyful through dialogues. (Dhungana, 2020, pp. 50-51)

We hope that we have clarified our meanings of how Living Educational Theory has transformed our lives and that we have provided evidence of our influence on ourselves, on others, and on social formations in cultures of inquiry using our energy-flowing values as standards of judgment. Living Educational Theory has transformed our way of living/life: we

feel that our personal and professional lives have improved; we think that we have evidence to support our claims to know this; we appreciate that our validators have supported our claims and have given us the means to strengthen them. However, there is no rest from the pressure to be better, to contribute to a better world, to human flourishing.

6. Next Steps/Going Forward

We are very excited to share that Cathy has been accepted to start her PhD at Trent University with a focus on the new Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills strand of the Ontario Mathematics Curriculum (2020). Jackie will continue to mentor her as she conducts and shares her research on improving her practice.

With Shivani Mishra, Parbati Dhungana, Jack Whitehead and Michelle Vaughan, Jackie presented a symposium virtually at AERA 2021: Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in global contexts. That group plans to write an article for publication based on it. In addition, plans are underway for proposals for AERA 2022. She will be presenting two papers at ARNA 2021 on June 17 and at the virtual SY.N.THE.SI. The Heuristic Teachers' Society International Conference, September 11, 2021: "An Outlook in the future: Education in 2030 and the role of the Teacher as a Professional." She also continues to support her mentees in global cultures of inquiry for the creation of their living-educational-theories and completion of their doctorates.

Never has it been so important for us to focus on our 'individuality and its peculiarity', to personally act in a way more in line with our values than during this global pandemic. To focus our actions on what aligns with our values allows us to experience "the individual joy of knowing my personality as an objective, sensuously perceptible, and indubitable power" (Bernstein, 1971 p. 48).

In his paper, *Fuzzy Generalisation: an approach to building educational*, Bassey (1998) makes the point:

I discussed the value of studies of single events (which in a later paper, following Simon, 1980, I called 'studies of singularities') and suggested that the relatability of a research study (ie the extent to which a reader could relate it to their own practice) was a more useful concept than generalisability.

We believe that our research into our dialogical way of being highlights the importance of relatability in Bassey's sense that the relatability of our research (the extent to which you, our reader, can relate it to your own practice) is a more useful concept than generalisability. Bigger (2021) says, "Unique researchers investigating unique circumstances cannot be replicated by others in other contexts, but can be relatable, contributing to a broader picture and inviting further discussion." As Glenn, 2021 points out in her article for this issue, "The potential influence of authors' transformation on us as readers is difficult to track."

We intentionally set out to improve the relatability of our text by including our real dialogues, the dialogues we had via video chat about how Living Educational Theory has

improved our practice and our lives and we supported these claims with evidence from our video clips.

We hope by bringing you inside our dialogic way of researching and being together that you, our reader, can see and hear the love, respect and trust we have for and in each other and how this is integral to our process and authentic to the content of our research. We hope your future is already different because we have touched and inspired you with the story of our learning. We feel that we are "...requiring a response." (Buber, 1970, p. 39). We invite your feedback on our intentions and, most importantly, invite and challenge you to loosen the shackles of dominant forms of text-based representation, turn the camera on your practice, engage in loving educational dialogue and explore your values in a culture of inquiry. Join us in our creative battle for doing research differently!

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