



Editorial Foreword

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The contributing authors in this issue are based in the U.S.A., Netherlands and Canada, and their articles illustrate an interesting diversity of approaches under the heading 'Living Educational Theory research'. The common denominator being each author's conviction to apply Living Educational Theory research, as a distinct and significant research paradigm, in order to study to understand, improve and explain their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the institutions and organisations where they live and work (Whitehead, 1989).

In this issue we witness and celebrate John Branch identifying his living values through auto-ethnography and hermeneutics, Femke Bijker expressing her values through Socratic dialogues, human flourishing, Participatory Action Research, and Living Educational Theory Research; and Jacqueline Delong through dialogue, visual data and a culture of inquiry. As Living Educational Theory researchers we embark on our research journeys and as we do so it appears that different forms, ways of doing and creating occur to us (Bigger, 2021). We are different people, John, Femke and Jacqueline, you and me. It seems therefore, that creating a living-educational-theory requires the practitioner researcher to accept much more responsibility for their research than working down a generic to-do list of a priori actions to be performed sequentially, as other research approaches prescribe. There are options, and decisions to be made in real time, and perhaps the choices made work towards defining the individualised nature, finger print, of the Living Educational Theory researcher.

On the other hand, I declare that I have visualised my approach to Living Educational Theory research as a list, and have even taken some comfort from this. I believe that I am, in part, a to-do-list type of person. At the time of writing this editorial foreword my list is: (a) identify my living values through symbolism and A/R/Tography spattered with magic realism, then, (b) think of my values as axioms, then, (c) move on but keep an eye out for times when my practice contradicts one or more of my values, then, (d) use this information to make meaning of and theorise about my educational responsibilities, and then, (e) finally represent and communicate this newly discovered knowledge in whatever way seems appropriate and to promote it as my personal (hopefully relatable) living-educational-theory. If I were in search of a systematic approach to my Living Educational Theory research then I could impose a list such as this, on myself. Otherwise I could just let myself free to explore and have fun. Or perhaps strive to achieve a balance between these two extremes?

John Branch in his paper, 'An Autoethnography of My Educational Values' offers a new approach to the identification of his living educational values. Further, the ten educational values Branch mines he then considers as axioms on the top of which he would build his living-educational-theory. He points out that this approach is reminiscent of stages often employed in applied science research including engineering: data collection, analysis and interpretation. This work makes a thought provoking good humored and lively contribution to this issue and challenges the reader to make explicit the mechanisms through which their values can be identified. Branch writes:

In his many writings, Whitehead invoked — implicitly or explicitly — action research as the conventional research tradition of Living Educational theory (although to be fair, he provided little methodological guidance). I used the term alternative in an almost defensive way, claiming the need for specific procedures in the absence of methodological guidance

Branch considers his values serving as the elementary units of his living-educational-theory and describes (graphy) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs and practices (ethno) that relate to him personally (auto) and perceives these writings as his data. These data, initially in the form of an incomplete 'raw' autobiographical and then finally elevated to become a full auto-ethnographical account. The latter is then analysed using hermeneutics as the analytic tool.

Femke Bijker in her paper, 'Intention and Reflection, Doing and Dialogue' notes that the question of what is desirable in education is linked to values-based education, and that in the Netherlands politics interferes too much and too often in education. She says, 'politics is responsible for the overarching goal, but implementation, evaluation and adjustment must be the first responsibility of the field of practice.' She considers that thinking refers to theory and doing is about new experiences and that thinking and doing are interwoven with each other.

People involved have too little say, doing and thinking are parcelled out. There seems to be a contemporary tendency to distinguish between doing the work by certain people and thinking about how the work should be done by others.

Bijker concludes that she has 'been working from values especially the ontological values unconsciously for years' but the writing of this paper has helped to make her personal

values explicit. Further, she was able to attempt to partition her values into ontological and relational (Mellett, 2020). She asks:

What exactly can I contribute from my (different) roles and positions to the collective vision in the (power) structures of the environments I work in?

She wonders that while her biggest influence is on an interpersonal level, will she be able to make a contribution that would grow independently outside of herself?

Jacqueline Delong in her paper 'A Living Educational Theory Research in Cultures of Inquiry: an approach to professional development' argues that Living Educational Theory research is a most professional form of professional development and also a means of moving from knowledge-inquiry to wisdom-inquiry (Maxwell, 2021).

The concept of a 'culture of inquiry' originated from Delong's doctoral research. It is an organic concept she currently describes as containing five elements: (1) creating a safe space, (2) the building of loved-into-learning relationships, (3) embracing vulnerability and an unpressured willingness to learn (4) the embodiment of knowledge and the Eastern Wisdom Tradition, and (5) creating living-educational-theories expressing life affirming energy and contributing to human flourishing.

This paper builds on the living-educational-theories of a copious quantity of teachers Delong has supported, and on her practice-based research over several decades.

She writes:

While I have reflected and written on the topic for many years, I feel an educational responsibility to explicitly define a Living Educational Theory Research in cultures of inquiry approach to improving our practice.

She uses the word 'approach' as an alternative to 'model' in order to communicate its flexibility a-way-of-life phenomena to be owned and modified by the individual. In her concluding remarks, Delong suggests that:

The risk for a school/university system is that once the teachers find their own voices, have control over their own learning' ... 'challenging the inequitable power structures that exist in our places of practice they will not willingly give that power back.

You may have noticed that there are some interesting similarities and differences between the three papers described. For example, Delong and Bijker communicate inequitable power structures, Bijker and Branch propose approaches to the identification of their living values. This issue consists of three comparable studies. Comparable because each study is the living-educational-theory of a practitioner researcher. Williamson and Whitehead (2021) propose an initial classification of the Living Educational Theory Research literature, and define a Living Meta-Analysis as a qualitative meta-analysis with inclusion criteria set to Living-Educational-Theory research, irrespective of whether the researcher proposes to build their own living-educational-theory informed by their meta-analysis.

Marie Huxtable's review of Suresh Nanwani's book 'Human Connections: Teaching Experiences in Chongqing, China and Beyond Singapore' is a touching insight into a non-

Chinese speaker's attempt to teach a Chinese speaking audience. A situation where learning, creativity, appreciative living, and ikigai are truly much more important than simply acquiring knowledge.

In his review of Victor Frankl's book 'Yes to Life: In spite of everything' Jack Whitehead explores the importance of Frankl's ideas for Living Educational Theory researchers in the context of Frankl's commitment to the importance of each individual, to the love of seeing our loved one in all their uniqueness and individuality, and to the responsibility in saying 'yes to life'!

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