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Educational Journal of Living Theories

Foreword

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The Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) has been specifically created in order to enable individuals to speak their own truths, often hard-won and challenging. It is therefore with a sense of humility as well as pleasure that I invite you to read what we have on offer for the second issue of our journal: six papers by authors from countries ranging from Norway, Ireland, Japan and England, and work-contexts ranging from university teacher-training, primary and post-primary, undertaking Ph.D. work, and nurse-healing.

There are many ways in which these papers are distinguishable but it is in what unifies them that I want to elaborate on in this Foreword. Although it is impossible to state that there is such a thing as a 'standard' living educational theory (because each person's account is necessarily unique and created within the constellation of their own educational values), there are some underlying aspects which unify them, and enable them to be called living educational theories.

The papers you are about to read are all written from the point of view of practitioners searching to improve their practice as they try to live out their values more fully. Each contributor is describing and explaining their own living educational theory, which constitutes a major departure from more traditional education (as distinct from educational) research journals that concentrate on empirical knowledge without any acknowledgement of the value-laden and personal nature of that knowledge; they dismiss such knowledge as inferior and without educational validity.

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The accounts in this journal are written from the assumption that knowledge and theorising are in dialectical relationship with the knower, and that individuals both create knowledge and are created by it. In these dynamic encounters with knowledge, practice and theory are transformed. The authors here are themselves the agents of sought-for improvement, rather than studying what constitutes change. In our authors' attempts to enhance what they are doing, they stand in a paradoxical state of both testimony and development.

What is also similar in design is the authors' determination to live their lives by standards they take responsibility for creating and developing with the people they work with. The authors have in common their desire to submit their papers to rigorous and public validation through our open-reviewing process. This journal operates an entirely open-reviewing process. If you read through the discussions at <http://ejolts.net/moodle/mod/forum/view.php?id=5> which is used to facilitate the improvements of the first drafts, and give recommendations for publication, you will see the progress of reflection and the development of the underlying values that have been facilitated through this approach. Reviewers and authors alike seem to share the view that this process is challenging but helpful in the development of ideas, practices and conclusions.

Another similarity of these papers is in the way in which authors make elaborate use of video, visual and audio material to substantiate their claims to be influencing others educationally. It is clear that text alone is not sufficient to communicate the complexities of human development and values. In creating descriptions and explanations of their work it is necessary, as Eisner (1997) foresaw, to find alternative way of representing their lived experiences. Thus, in the use of such material they are inviting you to step into their practice more closely, and see for yourself what it is they are doing. This not only changes the nature of the knowledge that the authors are dealing with, it also brings the reader/observer closer to the process. The next step to this may be something like interactivity, in which you are invited to inter-react with the ideas, rather than simply receive them. Our open-review process may be a step in this direction.

As well as the above, each author uses the *ipsative criterion* – in other words, a comparison made not between individuals, but an inner critique of an individual's own development – as a central truth-teller in the processes of coming to understand how to improve practice. To put oneself on the line and say: *this is where I stand; this is what I know; this is what I believe in*; requires a dedication to truth not only about the world outside but the world inside. In this issue you will read accounts of journeys that are both externally visible and internally transformational.

In what distinguishes these paper I have neither the knowledge nor the space to explore, but I would like to point out the range of concerns in this issue. Je Kan Adler-Collins explores how, in Japan, he is trying to resolve Western and Eastern ways of being as his contribution to a nursing curriculum. This curriculum for the healing nurse enables hands-on methods of healing to achieve a status in a culture that doesn't accord a high position to a largely-female workforce, or to a body of knowledge considered to be static and esoteric.

Martina Clerkin writes about how she is improving her work with primary school students in their study of the Irish language with the use of e-portfolios from within a

curriculum that imposes what are to be the criteria for success before the process has even begun. She explores the 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989) of wanting the children to be creative and use critical thinking whilst at the same time imposing this structure on them, and comes to interesting solutions to this dilemma.

Sigrud Gjøtterud from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences explores how love and critique help in the guiding process of initial teacher-education, both with her students and colleagues. Through a process of learning how to be open to what it means to critique others, and by relating that to her own experiences of critique, she comes to an understanding with her colleagues and students of how to develop a more person-centred guiding process, one that respects the differences in human beings. Her guiding process is a story of her and others' increasing sensitivity to the need for a safe but challenging environment for learning.

Teresa Hennessy is a teacher and ICT coordinator in a post-primary school in West Dublin, and Donal O'Mahony is a teacher and assistant in a post-primary school in North Dublin. Both are considering the development of aiding learning in Irish schools through online-environments, such as the Moodle system we are using at EJOLTS in our open-review process. Donal stresses critical thinking as a key aim with his students, and Teresa emphasises empowerment. Both are concerned that their students receive sufficient educational support, and explore how the internet environment facilitates this.

Jane Spiro is a lecturer at Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, UK, and her paper explores the nature of her own creativity as a teacher and a writer and how her creativity impacts on her practice. In coming to terms with some of the contradictions inherent in her work, she learns how to enhance the dualities and transform them into something new. This paper reveals a profound commentary on self-actualisation and the writer emerges as a forceful influence both for her own development and that of her students.

Finally, I would like to pay a special tribute to the work that is going on in Dublin City University (DCU) supervised by Dr. Margaret Farren and Yvonne Crotty. Their work in supervising individuals pursuing their own educational theories through the use of digital technologies has been a major influence in this particular issue and EJOLTS is proud to be part of the spread of this influence in Ireland and beyond. Three of the papers you are about to read stem from Margaret Farren's supervision of Masters students, Martina Clerkin, Teresa Hennessy, and Donal O'Mahony. Donal and Teresa are now registered for part-time Ph.D. research at Dublin City University.

We hope you find these papers stimulating and we are eager to hear from you about your thoughts on this second issue, or indeed about any ways in which you think we can improve what we are doing.

References

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