

Foreword

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In the 5th issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) we present four papers by authors who are all educators. The studies are dialogues relating to the authors' endeavours in the teaching of academic English, learning through the methodologies of collaborative self-study, the challenges of teacher motivation and education policy and Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory. Each author promotes their value-laden belief. This unites them in common cause - the values they hold to be empowering and effective for students and the principles of teacher commitment. Four studies confront the tension experienced in education today in their own unique way and at the same time hold on to the dynamic loving energy which makes effective yet caring teachers. Each one asks, "How do I improve what I am doing for personal and social good?"

William J. Barry's paper "Challenging the Status Quo Meaning of Educational Quality: Introducing Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory©" derived from his Ph.D. thesis, describes the results of using TQ theory as a guide for leadership decisions that he took and the outcomes as a caring school leader who performed with sensitivity to the values and beliefs of other people.

Through the data collections and the explanation of their analysis we see how he transformed as a leader and human being. We develop a deeper understanding of TQ and how it can change us. However, that is half the story. The paper enables us to understand that the impact of his influence and existence had on other people: on their learning, sense of meaning and worth and being cared about. The scholastic paper is about the creation of a performance environment that is life-affirming, need-fulfilling and enhanced.

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The second paper – “Transcending boundaries and borders: Constructing living theory through multidimensional inquiry” by Jill B. Farrell, Natasha A. Vernaza, Samuel S. Perkins, Jennie Lee Ricketts-Duncan, Daniel J. Kimbar is a collaborative action research inquiry, by a team of university professors and doctoral students from Barry University, Miami Shores, FL. As researchers their aspiration was to make a significant contribution to quality practice and quality theory while helping the other members of the group to do the same. They take a multiple perspective of mentoring where teacher of the student and student of the teacher become one. The idea of “Transcending Boundaries and Borders” is the focus of the study which was stirred through the question “As educators and doctoral students, can we influence each other's learning?” The authors have experimented with diverse ways of communicating their “living theory” such as narratives, poems, graphics and drawing and thus enabling us to gain a more informed, critical perspective of their the real micro worlds. By doing so they have offered an evidence-based account of their journey of learning, impacting and transforming in an inimitable way which makes this paper an interesting and thought provoking read.

“Reflections from the Margins on Education and the Culture of Audit and Performativity” by Kevin Mc Dermott pertains to the multifaceted relations between commitment, important life events, career-phase, age and educational policy. He takes us into a stimulating world of inquiry of educational policy and personal values and reveals that integrity, authenticity and personal meaning are key to sustaining the commitment of teachers. The discussion on obligations of a teacher deals with the topic on how personal life events affected a teacher and how they have enhanced his personal commitment and resilience as a teacher in the context of educational reform.

The implementation of action research in Sara Salyers’s paper – “Formal English without tears: Rewriting the narrative of the ‘low-level’ learner” gives evidence of her transformation... a changed perspective. Through the vivid description of her classroom and the students in Part One Sara has us captivated. Instantaneously we begin to empathise with the students and Sara. We begin to understand the struggle with learning a language both alien and allegedly “superior” to their own. Her questions on the validity of testing methods raise an interesting point. For people who listen to a foreign language, an unknown word can be like an obstacle causing them to stop and think about the meaning, making them miss the next part of the speech act. Furthermore with the implementation of inclusive education, teachers have been challenged to fine-tune their pedagogy. However, little is known about the inner journey which transformed these teachers. In her boundary-crossing study Sara describes how by changing her own instructional paradigm, the dynamic in her classroom changed profoundly, enabling her to remain faithful to her values, her living theory of caring pedagogical practice.

Looking at the wonderful educators drawn together in this volume, one cannot help but appreciate the fact that the teacher must be a fellow traveller in the exciting pursuit of knowledge. By following our living theory we look at our practice with enlightened eyes and as Maxine Greene suggests, if as teachers we can revisit our work with renewed eyes and transform ourselves through the critical inquiry of our fallible pedagogy we will experience professional growth.