

Foreword

Yves Bertrand

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Québec, Canada

*Note: Since 1970, Yves Bertrand has written many articles and books on education, organizational theories, theories of communication, and philosophy of life. Recent books include *Contemporary Theories and Practice in Education*, *The Ordinary Hero*, *Nowhere Else*, *Le jardin intérieur*. You can read more details of the work of Yves Bertrand at <http://ejolts.net/node/51>

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Contemporary educators are attracted by what we could call living theories, educational praxis, and practical tools. These core dimensions of any educational process do appear significantly in this EJOLT (Educational Journal of Living Theories) issue that contains three fascinating papers.

One key factor is the practical aspect of a theory. Any theory has to be successful in the everyday action. For example, scaffolding is an attractive theory. Is it good? Well, the paper written by Elspeth Hennessy, “How am I learning to scaffold a synchronous online professional development course?”, shows that scaffolding can be a key strategy in the teaching/learning process. Scaffolding is a way of providing support. I am always surprised that educators do not consider this teaching strategy as a key concept in training. We must not forget that empathy is a key value in this process. In fact, we think it is reasonable to help people. As Elspeth Hennessy writes, to educate is to help people. Then, empathy and the desire to help learners are core values in learning how to improve a professional practice.

Another puzzling aspect of transforming a specific practice by using the latest technologies is the personal living part of a theory. I guess every developer, who is interested by communication technologies, has to work with passion and determination. Personal circumstances play a significant part in the definition of a personal philosophy of education. Moira Laidlaw shows, in her paper entitled “Overcoming ‘Culture’ Shocks: Learning to do things differently”, that teachers’ personality is a key factor in developing an educational strategy.

Most tragic events in our life can help or jeopardize our vision of education. Sometimes, it does not go as we would like to; obviously, we can have setbacks and transforming them into opportunities is not an easy task. It can threaten our perception of relationships with students. However, to keep working with optimism and confidence is easier said than done. Action research and professional practice do have a starting block: a desire to change the rules of education. It is the desire to create a new reality. As Moira Laidlaw shows in her life of educator, motivation is the key to successful innovation. Otherwise, no educational innovation will stand for a long time.

An interesting aspect of the educational process is the fact that most innovative educators will absorb abstract theories and convert them into practical theories. Any praxis works with success when there is a relationship between theory and practice. We have a good example of a reflected practice in the paper written by Caitriona Rooney: "How am I using inquiry-based learning to improve my practice and to encourage higher order thinking among my students of mathematics?" As Caitriona Rooney argues very clearly, "Adopting an inquiry-based approach could help my students appreciate mathematics and apply a higher level of thinking to their work because it engages students in investigating real world questions and it enables students to discover knowledge for themselves." We totally agree with Caitriona Rooney: increased student interest and participation are the keys for a successful education.

Finally, we must observe that most educational innovations' success relies on a balance between inspiration, motivation, personal values, and theories of education. That is what those three papers showed brilliantly.