



Foreword

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For the past four years the Educational Journal of Living Theories has benefitted enormously from the contribution made by Dr. Margaret Farren of Dublin City University as Chair of the Editorial Board. Margaret has been influential in the innovations in e-learning at Dublin City University that have led to many valuable contributions to the EJOLTS archive. Many thanks Margaret for all you have done, it is much appreciated.

This issue of EJOLTS contains contributions from Branko Bognar on “Initiating teachers’ action research: empowering teachers’ voices,” from Sanja Vidović and Verica Kuharić Bučević on “The enhancement of creativity in Technical Education,” and from Sonia Hutchison on “A living theory of caring.”

In his Foreword to the last issue of EJOLTS Yves Bertrand (2012) made the point that: “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.”

The contributions to this issue sustain this balance and brilliance. Bognar’s contribution shows his scholarly understanding of theories of education with his inspiring personal commitment to values that have sustained his motivation to continue to support teachers in their initial teacher education programmes and their continuing professional development to create their own living-educational-theories.

The originality of this contribution is in the insights that Bogнар shows about the influences of the historical and cultural influences of particular contexts in constraining or offering opportunities for improving practice through the creation by individuals of their living-educational-theories. Of particular significance is the longitudinal nature of Bogнар's commitment and enquiry. He draws insights from his early work as a pedagogue some 13 years ago and in section 8 on "New projects and visions" (p. 36) he shows some of the activities that have emerged from this early work in empowering teachers' voices.

This paper should be required reading for all those policy makers around the world who are interested in promoting the transformational nature of living-theories in continuing professional development for improving practice and generating knowledge. These policy makers should take note of Bogнар's point that a living-theory approach in professional development cannot be equated with an occasional professional gatherings. Creating living-educational-theories in which individuals accept their responsibility for living their values as fully as possible becomes a way of life that needs to be recognised in policies for supporting professional development programmes. Bogнар provides the evidence of the expression of his own responsibility in sustaining his commitment to live as fully as possible, through his work in education, the values that carry hope for the future of humanity. The evidence of Bogнар's commitment to his values of cooperative learning and to contributing to the emancipation of the teachers in their own learning shows his integrity in researching his own practice to enhance his educational influence in his own learning, in the learning of the teachers he works with and in the learning of the local and global social formations in which he lives, works and researches.

Sanja Vidović and Verica Kuharić Bučević move readers into the fundamental relationships of education between teachers and pupils. They focus on the vital issue on the enhancement of creativity and locate this enhancement within the field of Technical Education. Vidović shares her experience of existing as a living contradiction in the sense of recognising, with the help and videos of classroom practice and through discussion with critical friends, particularly with Kuharić Bučević, that the student was not at the centre of her teaching and that her approach was not enabling students to be creative. The experience of seeing oneself as a living contradiction is often accompanied by the spontaneous response of imagining what to do to move one's practice in a way that realises more fully the values that one espouses. This happened with Vidović and evidence is presented that shows her own creative influence in stimulating the creativity of her students.

One of the original contributions of this paper focuses on the difficulties of supporting students in the peer-evaluation and self-evaluation processes. The paper reveals that there is much work to be done in transforming students' approaches to evaluation:

Students had previously been taught to evaluate their final work and give a correct answer. They didn't manage well with the observing and evaluating a creative process, which led to diverse solutions and they didn't have experience of evaluating original ideas. (p. 75)

Another original contribution is in the sharing of an insight about mutuality between students and teachers: "Thus, the stimulation of students' creativity required a different structure of the educational process. In other words the educational process should be a mutual activity of students and teachers. The mutual activity supposes an agreement between participants." (p. 76)

The paper also demonstrates an impressive scholarly engagement with the ideas of others in the generation of living-educational-theories.

Sonia Hutchison explores how her story from child in care to chief executive of a carers' centre and carer of her birth Mother has developed her living theory of care-giving. The originality of this contribution includes the use of video in the creation of a visual narrative that enables Hutchison to communicate the importance of including "love" in her living theory of caring. In my experience many living-theorists are rather reticent about acknowledging the importance of love as an energy-flowing value that needs to be included in a valid explanation of educational influence. Hutchison shows how this can be done in the generation of a valid explanation of influence in expressions of caring. What is also remarkable in Hutchison's presentation is the inclusion of video-clips of her relationships with colleagues in a carer's network, within differential power relations, which have all received ethical approval for their use in this visual narrative.

Much traditional research eliminates personal issues from academic discourse. In the creation of her living theory of caring, Hutchison shows how closed boundaries that serve to separate personal, professional and academic discourses can be fluidised in a way that permits the inclusion of personal, professional and academic understandings where they are appropriate and necessary in creating a valid explanation of care-giving. I think that this is particularly well done with the narrative that includes video "Talking with my mum" (p. 46) and with image "My biological mum on a trip with me to Spain" (p. 48). Within her narrative Hutchison includes her meaning of being an authentic leader who is seeking to live as fully as possible her values of love, participation and mindfulness. As with the other contributions to this issue I believe that extending the influence of these values is helping to make the world a better place to be.