

Transcending colonising influences across cultural boundaries: a continuing journey of lifelong learning.

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Oman

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Abstract

The paper, grounded in the development of a national B.Sc. curriculum in Health, narrates the challenges and learning gained from living my values as they evolved through my praxis as an international nurse educator. In past publications, I have explained my work in the United Kingdom, Japan, Thailand and China. In this article I bring those learnings to my work and research in Oman. It is a multi-dimensional account that integrates different data stories. It shares the art, science, and craft of nursing alongside medical science and the biological models, which need to be holistically merged into an educational and skills process that is not driven by power, is not colonizing, and generates new collaborative forms of knowledge.

The text engages with my local context where I modify my knowledge and understandings of the Arabic culture in which I work. I show that the complexities require an openness to dissolving boundaries of nursing scholarship and practice across borders. This offers a glimpse of the dynamics of global citizenship. In Oman, higher education and the traditional values of nursing are moving away from their dependence on the medical model for its authority of knowing. Nurse education is changing rapidly. Such a process required a shift in the balance of theory and practice. It is a challenge for life for international nurse educators.

Keywords: Narratives; Living Theory action research; Colonization; International nurse professional education; Paradigm shifts; Education across borders.

Introduction

Working and researching in the UK, Japan, Thailand, China and Oman, I am aware of the importance of focusing and sustaining educational conversations on transcending colonising influences across cultural boundaries for improving professional practice and generating educational knowledge. A core value that I hold is never to willingly become an instrument for colonization. This has been lived to the best of my ability as I seek to identify knowledge generation and knowing in the many different cultural contexts in which I have taught. I have the self-need to keep my communications safe for I know that the spoken word is never the received word and my native English is often a second language to those whom I teach, somewhat of a paradox in itself. Metaphorically, I see my ontological self as the frame of a window, and the panes of glass in the window invite the reader to discover differing but connected aspects of my different neighborhood of self, embracing lifelong learning research and life as the classroom. The boundaries of understanding, which are so important to communication, because they are distinct but not discrete, are those of the panes of glass.

The reader is not separated from me in individual terms and shares with me a fluid dynamic of perception. I offer these panes, set in the frame of my selfhood, as a means of avoiding the separation of one from the other, and in so doing my reader and I co-create a journey of understanding and exploration. I believe I am being inclusional. Rayner (2004) said, "... inclusionality is an awareness of the vital inclusion of space in the fluid dynamic geometry of nature". Therefore, the focus of this paper opens a new window from the ones I opened when I finished my Masters in Education (Adler-Collins 2000) and previous British Education Research Association and other papers (2004a; 2004b; Adler-Collins 2005; Adler-Collins 2006).

In 2000, I moved to Japan where I studied as a Shingon monk for three years while waiting for Fukuoka University to be built during which I built a school, healing center, Non-Profit Organisation and hospice. I completed my doctoral research programme on the implementation of a B.Sc. curriculum for holistic healing touch for nursing in Japan (Adler-Collins 2008) now at Masters of Arts level. As a visiting professor, I taught at B.Sc., B.Sc.N, master level nursing, education, tutoring, and researching traditional forms of knowing at Khon Kaen University Thailand and Beijing University of Chinese Medicine 2009-2013. My present research (Adler-Collins, 2014) is focused on my work as Senior Nurse Tutor and consultant in the Ministry of Health (MOH) in the Sultanate of Oman as the course lead in the Ministry of Health new B.Sc.N. programme.

Framing the article

This research is ongoing and a complex process in a complex context. Language barriers and cultural differences influenced the research. Gaps in my own comprehension of the cultural overtones, undercurrents and nuances of Omani culture present a steep learning curve to me because the circumstances are unique. Yet many of the issues I observe are familiar from my experiences in other countries but are approached in a very Omani

manner. In any transcultural context opportunities for misunderstandings and conflict abound. At this point I just wish to flag up that I am using Inclusivity (Rayner, 2003) as an ontological philosophy as well as a methodological consideration, as for me it is both. I am researching the extension of my boundaries of my claimed knowing as I embrace and research my understandings of the issues of managerial approaches to strategic planning in nurse education in Oman (Adler-Collins, 2013).

To assist my reader, who may not be familiar or comfortable with how this research is framed, I include video clips that offer underpinning data evidence that extends beyond the use of text. Such data opens a window of opportunity into understanding the values through which I live my life. They may be different to that of the reader. However, they will give the reader an opportunity to engage with the conceptual framework and make their own judgement call as to the rigor, transparency and trustworthiness of the account. These are core requirements for generating my living-educational-theory accounts of praxis. At no point do I ask or require the reader to agree with my values; I do ask that the reader suspends judgement and walks alongside the narratives as they weave the lived praxis of my generating my ontological values as an International educator. The reader may well feel uncomfortable and confused as the narrative is not laid out in easily understandable themes and logical flow of text. This is because living narratives do not follow such a pattern and complexity is a natural part of the context. I ask that the reader does not read the account as one would read a book but to read it as a listener, as someone is telling a story. I welcome any communications that arise from the engagement of this narrative and can be contacted at the address listed below.

My practice and narrative is grounded in the day-to-day issues of upgrading a Diploma course of Nurse Education to a B.Sc.N. programme for allied Health Sciences. I offer insights into the transcending of colonising influences across cultural boundaries as a normative standard of judgment that can be used to legitimate the educational knowledge emerging from my teaching. In researching my practice, I engage with the colonising influences in the limited forms of representation used in Omani educational research to date. This paper is grounded in the expression of inclusive ontological values from my differing perspectives within different cultures.

The framing for the generation of knowledge includes both my living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1989) and my living-theory-methodologies (Adler-Collins, 2000, 2008; Whitehead, 2008). By a Living Theory research methodology I am meaning the unique way in which practitioner-researchers generate their own living-theories. By a living-educational-theory, I am meaning the unique explanation individuals generate for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they work.

While generating my living-theory accounts of praxis are sometimes problematic for the reader who may not be familiar or comfortable with the methodology of such accounts, as each account is unique in its living narrative, the reader will find signposts in the text that highlight video data that are intended to provide another layer of understanding outside that of textual representation. I exercise my educational responsibility as I generate my own living-educational-theory showing that history, praxis, and values can be uncomfortable partners but they present unprecedented opportunities for change for good.

The communication of meanings of integrated culturally dynamic standards of judgment, that include flows of energy and values that address colonising influences across different cultural boundaries and that can transform what counts as educational knowledge in the Academy remains a major challenge to an international educator. Cycles of reflection, by necessity, require critical ownership of the individual's identified bias and assumptions. The comfort blanket of my knowing is dissolved with rigorous compassion to allow the dynamic assimilation of new learned or experienced situations in co-creating new understandings of self and the neighbourhoods of self.

I am mindful of my mistakes and see them as opportunities to learn in that the grounding of the values that I hold may be different from those in my context; they are held in a degree of tension, tension in the sense that my lived values are strong enough to be challenged in their living and fluid enough to let go of when a better understanding modifies evolving new and deeper understandings (Moustakas, 1990). These new understandings will form a textual framework on to which they can weave the story of evolution, determination, courage and vision that abounds in the process and development of Omani Nursing Education at B.Sc.N. level.

At this point I wish to bring to the attention of my reader the values that underpin my lived epistemology. The following link will reveal to you the fundamental values on which I frame and reframe my engagement with both the inner and outer worlds of my reality. It is the intention of the visual data to make clear the bias that I have through the filter of my constructed truths, accrued through the engagement with many different cultures during my lifelong learning.



Video 1: [Values in Action](http://youtu.be/GR8p1ckSN6g) (Adler-Collins, 2014a) - <http://youtu.be/GR8p1ckSN6g>

I would like these images to speak for themselves but I understand that perhaps some guidance for interpretation is needed. These images show the multi-dimensions of my *lifelong learning*, what I've learned and how it has influenced my practice. I weave the threads of the environment around me. In the order that they occur in the video at .32 seconds, the images are read from top left to right:

1. Human energy research-here we can actually see the energy fields of a woman in reflection suggesting that human energy and touch are not in the imagination (Adler-Collins, 2003);
2. The look of fungating breast carcinoma (cancer) - I learned so much about supporting people in the hospice in Thailand without the use of pain control pharmacology through using touch (Adler-Collins 2004);
3. Becoming a Buddhist Monk. I learned the value of meditation, mindfulness and prayer as I created a Holistic touch curriculum for a university in a healing nurse curriculum, Holistic Touch [copyright] (Adler-Collins 2007) and created free community centers to help empower middle-aged women to come back to adult education as therapists in Fukuoka, Japan (Adler-Collins 2007);
4. Supporting Arab nurses in Oman;
5. Thai herbs: I learned about the connectedness of our humanity to nature and the healing power of plants;
6. End of life: I learned of the privilege to be present in the final breath of another human being;
7. Dubai nursing: I learned about the courage of women educators seeking to empower women to step up in leadership roles in nurse education and praxis;
8. Chinese herbs;
9. Culture and beauty: I learned of the rich cultural crafts and arts that reflected different embedded values of beauty;
10. Community healing touch: I learned that in dark times and lonely places, human touch has more value than gold (Adler-Collins, 2007);
11. Love: I learned that love begins with the love and forgiveness of self (Adler-Collins, 2004);
12. Oman nursing: I learned that inspired leadership could change the path of nations;
13. Classrooms: by changing the paradigms of teaching from chalking and talking to group student centered learning, students eyes can really shine;
14. Portfolios: I learned of the richness of new forms of representing scholarship through art;
15. History: I learned of the breath of colonisation hidden behind a smile;
16. Terminal care: I learned that in the final moments of life the greatest and only thing we can bring to our patient is the essence of our humanness without masks or ego

(Adler-Collins, 2013).

This visual presentation made in 2011-2013 has held a trusted space for me to move into and out of chaos as I seek to make sense of the worlds in which I have lived. It has in a very real way become a comfort blanket and zone of safety, one with which I am familiar and trust. However, my desire to live my Buddhist values to their full requires me to seek knowing at the edge of my experiences as lifelong learning continues for as long as there is life. I use critical incidents as reference points to take account of what is happening and seek the flows and patterns of life affirming energy that the Chinese call Qi. In this paper I do not have the time and space to elaborate on each of these learnings that I have carried with me to each new situation and country. I will focus primarily on how this learning has informed my practice in my current situation as Senior Nurse Consultant in Oman since April 2014.

The article is framed under the following headings:

- Methodology and methods;
- The dynamics and challenges of global citizenship;
- Moving from an East Asian culture to an Arabian culture through an openness of praxis;
- Responding to the challenges with my learning from different cultures;
- Moving away from dependence on the medical model in Oman;
- Responding to the challenges with my learning from different cultures;

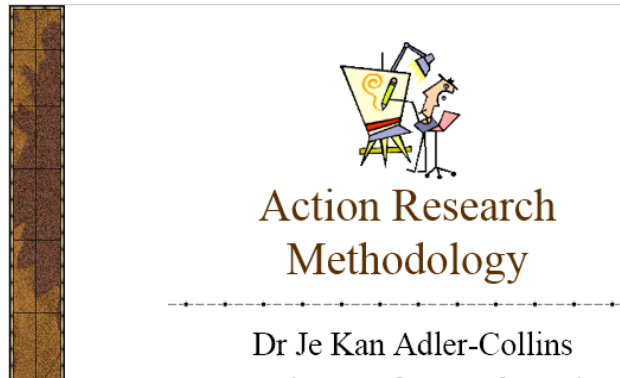
Next I share my methodology and methods.

Methodology and methods

A Western approach of combining two different qualitative methodological approaches, Living Theory action research (Whitehead, 1989) and heuristics (Moustakas, 1990) is used in this paper as a methodological framework within which I draw insights from action reflection cycles.

Action reflection cycles are used to clarify and communicate the meanings of the energy -flowing and values-laden standards of judgment in the course of their emergence in enquiries into improving professional pedagogical practices in forms of nursing that transcend colonising influences. They occur through my understandings of educational issues across boundaries in my living-theory perspective of my individual explanation of my educational influence in my own lifelong learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence and are influenced by my practice and writings. Visual narratives (figures/videos 1, 2, 3) are used with the action-reflection cycles to clarify the meanings of these energy-flowing values. These 'energy-flowing values' emphasize the importance of energy in whatever we are doing as we work at living our values as fully as possible. 'Standards of judgment' refer to the criteria we use to evaluate the validity of a claim to knowledge. In addition, 'energy-flowing' and 'values-laden standards of judgment' emphasize the importance of including energy within the standards.

To assist the reader with understanding the main ontological framework, the following video describes the cycles of action research that I used to frame my enquiry and actions in all of the countries in which I have worked. This version is in English; Japanese, Chinese and soon Arabic versions are available.



Video 2: [Video of Action Research Cycle](http://youtu.be/VTdGtO8Zpu8). (Adler-Collins, 2014b) - <http://youtu.be/VTdGtO8Zpu8>

Living Theory action research as a method of generating my own living-theory accounts of my learning requires transparency on behalf of the author, and here I declare a bias, namely that of the ontological position I hold as an ordained Buddhist priest, a position that is not easy to hold in an Islamic context. Yet with all my dealings, I have never been treated with any discourtesy related to my belief system. The Omani system is multi-cultural and highly tolerant of other beliefs outside that of Islam. To increase my understanding of the culture and its religious teachings, I set about reading the Holy Koran and found within its pages mysteries and insights that amazed me, so much so that in my life and in this paper, I continue to be a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989). My Western logical being and culture with its focus on objectivity, measurement and rationality is held in tension with my embraced Eastern subjective awareness, non-closure and compassionate nature coming from my Buddhist faith now lived in a background of the beauty of the Islamic faith and the Holy Koran. I do not see that this tension in any way negates the scholarship of this enquiry even when at times I may appear confused.

Such confusion arises from my desire to navigate my consciousness to a conclusion that supports my ontological position. As I reach each new moment of illumination, in the heuristic sense of knowing, such new understandings cause the whole kaleidoscope of myself to reshuffle. Such reshuffling brings about temporary confusion as new insights are integrated into my ontological praxis (Moustakas, 1990). In some cases, however, I have yet to find a satisfactory answer despite my new ontology seeping into all aspects of my life. However, I embrace the understanding that I am seeking an answer to a question that has yet to be revealed to me. In order to even hope to begin the process of understanding, I need to once again deconstruct what I think I know to let the space be created to embrace the new knowledge that serving in an Islamic multicultural context and my praxis is giving me.

This is a process with which I am familiar having passed through this deconstruction

of knowing or 'thinking I know' to that of being in a state of not knowing several times in my life. For as I reflect on these cycles, I am seeing patterns that at their core revolve around decolonizing knowledge and knowing and the challenges presented by global citizenship. By global citizenship, I hold in tension the paradox of my teaching. On the one hand, I am asking the Omani learners, who in this case are teachers of practitioners, to identify their cultural roots in terms of knowledge, history and values. On the other, I am looking for them to embrace a position of global citizenship that has a higher calling to humanity beyond that of local and national identity and values. In my doctoral thesis (Adler-Collins 2008 p. 60) I extended Schön's (1983; 1995) ideas of a new scholarship to include Boyer's (1992) concept of scholarship, comprising the Scholarships of:

- Discovery;
- Teaching;
- Application/Engagement;
- Integration Through Praxis.

This offered me a framework for the processes of scholastic enquiry and I reviewed this framework for application to my outer world of formal, state-approved education. In order to facilitate understanding of my practice and myself, I needed a basic model or framework that had to be able to handle the movement between the various methodologies used in my work. I needed a disciplined framework to act as a reference point so that I could use free association of thought but that provided structure to enable me to return to the matter under question when my enquiry ebbed and flowed. I have used Boyer's framework, combined with Polanyi's (1964) ideas that tacit forms of knowing could emerge using the rigour of scholarship. Polanyi's early thinking on tacit knowledge influenced Moustakas (1990) in his development of heuristic enquiry. Moustakas (1990) described heuristics as the:

... process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience. . . . The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. (p. 15)

I have used the Holy Koran as it revealed things to me in the sense that I could not read the book as one would do in reading any book. I evolved a way of reading the book as though I was a listener and that the text would speak to me telling me a story and inviting me into the story to experience it in a living sense, as I am also asking of my reader. I was astounded to find that the Holy Koran contained scientific revelation in biology and human anatomy that leaves you feeling amazed and humbled. The knowledge of the Holy Koran features centrally in my desire to serve and to teach as a nurse and scholar and with that thought that in time and with experience I will be able to understand more.

My ontological explorations as they evolve have profound impacts on me as my consciousness moves between differing states, positions and ideas. I need to find a way to step back, identify, and facilitate an understandable flow of logic for my reader. Such thinking is crucial to my desire to make sense of what is often incomprehensible. I mean

'incomprehensible' in the sense that I did not know the culture or the context of my praxis and, as I came to realise, the boundary of my knowing is truly my ignorance. Embracing this ignorance is a constant conscious process in my life as I seek to extend the boundaries of my knowing. At the same time, I want the story to retain its spontaneity and authenticity in its telling as it evolved alongside the internal and external events that shaped the story in the crucible of its praxis. I realise that I needed to suspend my judgments in order to allow the space for an idea or a thought to come to fruition. Often it was the case that I did not like or agree with the thoughts I was having; the "chatterbox of judgement" in my mind was vociferous and tenacious in its demands to be heard, listened to and acted upon. I needed to suspend judgement on those thoughts and recognise what was required of me by my Omani colleagues.

Such suspension is known as bracketing, described by Berger and Kellner (1981) when they said:

If such bracketing (of values) is not done, the scientific enterprise collapses, and what the [researcher] then believes to perceive is nothing but a mirror of his own hopes and fears, wishes, resentments or other psychic needs; what he will then not perceive is anything that can reasonably be called social reality. (p. 34)

In other words, I see the world as a projection of my own unconscious, and until I can become aware of the unconscious content I will not see the social construction of my reality (Vygotsky 1978). While agreeing with Berger and Kellner's understanding in part, I am more comfortable with Husserl's use of the term 'bracketing' (Cohen, Kahan et al., 2000), which is a mathematical expression to explain the suspension of belief which is not linked to science or social reality; rather, Cohen et. al. suggest that bracketing is the conscious process of suspending beliefs and prior assumptions about a phenomenon.

I will use bracketing within the written text because I see this as one way to suspend my beliefs so that the reader and I can gain a clearer understanding of a phenomenon, in this case, the influence of colonization. I use bracketing as demonstrated by Cunningham (1999) in his doctoral thesis. Cunningham utilised Van Manen's (1990) ideas on the bracketing of preconceptions, pre-judgments, beliefs and biases within textual accounts and explained:

[T]hat doesn't mean what I bracket is unimportant. No, it only means that I work on what is outside the brackets separately first. I distance myself from what is inside the brackets, temporarily, until I am satisfied that I have understood everything represented outside the brackets to the best of my ability. What is inside the brackets is grounded on my values. In bracketing these, I do not forget about them completely. No, it is just that I now have a device for keeping them at a distance while I examine the textual data in front of me. Later, I can synthesize both that which emerges from my examination of the data and that which is within the bracket. (p. 55)

I extend Cunningham's understanding by suggesting that "inclusional" bracketing allows more than one process to occur at the same time. Therefore, in my text the reader will find text within brackets that comes from: (a) my engagement with my reflective journal; and (b) my engagement with a discourse with myself as I discuss an issue or clarify a point. By "inclusional" I am suggesting that to suspend values is problematic as it causes

separation of identity, knowing and understanding. It would set up, in the sense of Inclusional theory (Rayner, 2003), a dynamic boundary that is in fact not dynamic because some of the creating elements of the dynamic [Self] are being suppressed through their suspension and therefore excluded. I believe that an inclusional dynamic would suspend, in conscious tension, both the expressed values and the held values, dynamically in the same space at the same time, allowing engagement through critical examination balanced with the understanding of bias that exists in the researcher. I give below an example of how I will use bracketing as a discourse with myself:

[How is this seemingly contradictory concept possible? I believe that this concept is not contradictory; rather, if you look at bodies of knowledge as having boundaries to that knowledge (known knowledge and unknown knowledge, acceptable knowledge and unacceptable knowledge (Bernstein 2000), these boundaries can have differing “fluid dynamics”. “Dynamics” used in the sense of the context each form of knowing was formulated in/through/by and “fluid” in the sense that the knowledge is not static (Rayner 2003; 2005). These boundaries are semi-permeable, and, like with any semi-permeable membrane, it is the size of the molecule and the size of the space that control the access to another space. If you see inclusional bracketing as the “conscious solvent” that acts to ensure differing levels of permeability between various bodies of knowledge, then all processes can take place at the same time but follow different osmotic (conscious understanding) gradients.

I mean that the story of my paper and its telling is a living narrative grounded in the facts of the actual events. The emotions that such events evoke are bounded by experience and memory. Such boundaries may be due to the nature of the experience being closed, exclusional and negative, or open, inclusional and positive or a mixture of the positive and the negative. Whatever they are, they are deeply felt; even if in the narrative, I am referring to events that have passed. The emotion-evoking memories are in fact neurologically embedded and living, and are being experienced again in real time; that of the present telling. Such bracketing gives insights to the reader as the discourse within the bracketing is seen as a reflective discourse with one’s self and allows the interaction between inner and outer worlds to be observed if not agreed with or followed. The honesty and transparency of the account remains intact but the authors cannot attach expectations of how the reader will engage with the material. That judgement call remains firmly in the domain of the reader.]

Bracketing has another function in that it allows the narrative to weave its textual pictures and engages the reader in focusing on the reading or experiencing of the narrative. It brings cohesion to an account and its flow is not interrupted by the intrusive use of academic referencing. Next, I share the situation that preceded the move from Japan to Oman.

The dynamics and challenges of global citizenship

My move to Sultanate of Oman was not expected and the circumstances that brought about the change were through a series of critical incidents. I include here my bracketed thoughts:

[These critical incidents triggered a chain of events which, once again, moved me to revisit

the fear of change and the freedom that facing the fear brings with it. It seems that however many times you face your fears, it gets no easier. However, facing the fear and the fear of change does bring with it the choice to change or not to change. Once the decision has been made a sense of peace, commitment and excitement is felt, at least until the new fear of the unknown presents itself.]

Opportunities presented themselves where I was able to move from an abusive and destructive educational management situation where all that I experienced in 14 years of sustained praxis and reflective enquiry showed me clearly how I did not want to live my life as a senior educator waiting for retirement. I am at a dangerous age, just short of sixty and one where the mind starts thinking about retirement, pensions plans and less stress. I could have played safe, stayed in situ, and collected my pension then moving on to the next phase of my life in a very planned and controlled manner. Because of the countries that I have worked in, I have had the privilege of seeing so many different systems of education from the inside as an educator. Doing nothing was not a real option. I needed a push to live my values that I had allowed to be drained to the depths of my soul as institutional indifference to abusive policies and practices. The dynamics of global citizenship (Coombs, Potts & Whitehead, 2014; Potts, 2012) have clearly presented challenges for my values and yet have provided opportunities to learn. That learning has given me new understandings of how to improve my practice that extend beyond my individual situation to that of the neighbourhoods of the global community. I accepted these new challenges as an agent for change.

One day it became clear to me that I was living a lie and killing the passion and love I have for education and nursing. The push came as illness hit me as suddenly: I became completely deaf in my left ear. This triggered three months of serious struggles with illness. My institution's reaction was to notify me that my salary would be reduced by half and I would lose my tenured position if I did not recover by a certain date. My original feelings were of anger and abandonment. I quote from my research journal:

I watched all the services that I had built up over 14 years with the local community, for the community dismantled, the healing clinic stopped, different professors giving different instructions, all research projects cancelled and all funding stopped. The President of the University claimed one thing and having no knowledge as to what was going on in his own university allowing it all anyway. All International treaties and academic agreements that I had help to broker were cancelled. This is the classic Japanese way of forcing someone to retire. Direct confrontation by those in institutional positions of power is unusual, usually because they lack the courage and decency to face people. They usually engage in a death by committees that they are in charge of so they can deny any actual responsibility and can hide behind the committee decision that will never go against the will of the Professor. Many good Japanese scholars have faced this. There is no teachers' union that has any form of legal power and academic abuse is alive and well in Japan, so much so it is almost institutional. (Journal written in Kumamoto Red Cross hospital, December 2013)

This presented me with a choice: my body was telling me that the years of hard work and stress had a price, one that I had ignored and for which payment was now due as my physical body demanded attention. Then out of the blue, came two amazing individuals, Dr Salid Al Toulby, Dean of the Oman Nursing Institute and Dr Majid , Directorate General for Nursing and Midwifery, both whom I respected as visionary people within Omani education and nursing. They contacted me after I presented in the International Council of Nursing

conference in Australia, suggesting that I come to Oman in a very senior position to work with them as a consultant helping Oman in its next steps of nursing education. An unbelievable opportunity presented itself. All that was required of me was to recover as soon as possible.

The skills of the medical team in Japan and a determination to take back the control of my life eventually provided me with the will to regain my health to such an extent that I could work in the capacity required of me. The injury with its ensuing complications would stay with me for life. The healing power of being given respect and someone believing in you and your abilities cannot be underestimated. Such knowing has provided me with a clear pathway to follow for I only had to reflect back on what I experienced and then make certain with every fabric of my being that I would not repeat such actions to others in the event that I ever held a position of authority and power. This fundamental learning was probably not what those who instigated the abuse expected as an outcome. Paradoxically, their actions and selfishness released me from complacency and gave me my working mantra for the total reshaping of myself as I committed to work in the service of Oman for the sheer pleasure of the job, supported by my wife, Japanese deshi (followers) and friends.

These two individuals are friends and accomplished scholars supporting the development and needs of education and service with a clear vision of the future. They both would be required to fight long and hard for my position and appointment to be approved and the fact they did proved to me that the Oman experience would be one so very different from what I had experienced in Japan.

I was inspired with the vision of Omani healthcare with all its challenges. It became fun again to be an educator to listen to the enlightened ideas, discuss education and policies and to be part of a multi-disciplinary team. My life had turned around: I was granted permission to revisit my skills as a trauma nurse, to engage with totally committed individuals who were focused but not blinded to the many different strategies that would be needed by Oman to fulfill their dreams. However, more than anything else, I was working with people who held a dream and were in it for the long run for the betterment of their country rather than just focusing on their individual gain. I felt humbled.

Sometimes seemingly, random, disconnected events coalesce in profoundly meaningful ways. Carl Jung (1989) called this synchronicity. Intuition and synchronicity are symbiotic processes. Recognizing interconnectedness is an exercise in intuition and enhanced intuition increases the awareness and likelihood of frequent synchronistic experiences. In his book *Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership*, Jaworski (1988) described a special state he called 'flow'. During the flow state, events, people, and resources come together effortlessly. It is as if they are communicating with one another, giving birth to a shared vision. Jaworski sees the experience of flow as one that is so rare and so enjoyable that people will seek to replicate it at great cost, even at the risk of life itself, just for the sake of having it again. In my understanding of my praxis I have been in that flow, experiencing it in my life and agree with Jaworski's comments to the extent of knowing when my life or my praxis in living global citizenship have moved outside the flow and knowing the narcotic nature of such an experience whilst immersed. This paper is not a victory narrative (MacLure, 1996) nor is it narrative wreckage (Frank, 1995). I claim that it is a living account of love at work (Lohr, 2006), grounded in the passion of my compassion

(Adler-Collins 2007, p. 358) to teach and to serve in the fullest sense of service: to serve humanity with humble mindfulness. I claim this from the power and authority of my own being as I reflect on what I did, what I experienced, and the events that impacted on my research and my praxis. In my classrooms in many different countries, my colleagues' and students' voices reached out to inform my learning and praxis in living global citizenship (Adler-Collins, 2013). For example in Japan, I received official recognition for my development of a healing nurse curriculum and the government's permission to bring in the power of healing across cultural boundaries with the idea of the healing touch in nursing at B.Sc.N and Master of Art levels. I cite two examples of Japanese students (using the research codes) reflecting on the power of healing hands from my Doctoral thesis:

HTR023: Session 7. When I suppressed the feeling and brought both hands close, it was surprised that 'mind' was felt between hands. I felt actually with whether this is mind, and it was impression. I was deep emotion that I was able to do greatly again as for mind. However, I had the question whether that collected "mind" is a good mind and whether it was a bad mind. I must think more. (p. 333)

HRT 066: I believe that there is the effect. It is because I thinks that it has the effect of curing people in warmth of people's hand in my old experience. ... Moreover, I think that I can load a hand with warm feeling about the same as the heart. I thought that I wanted to value my hand and touch as treasure. (p. 353)

The students' voices in Oman are not yet ready to be placed into the public domain in the normal ways of collecting evidence in the west. For example, photos, videos and interviews are not readily accepted in Omani culture and trust needs to be developed between the students and myself. When that trust has been built and they are ready to offer their voices to speak for themselves about the process of their learning and values, I will be able to be more specific.

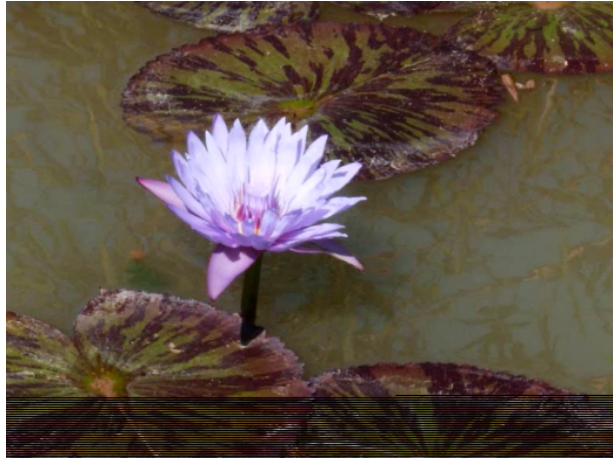
My transition from the controlled culture of Japan to the vibrant, often chaotic culture of Oman was anything but smooth. I was told that it would take at least six months to settle and start to appreciate the beauty and history of Omani people and culture. The administrative difficulties I experienced were nothing in comparison to the joy and satisfaction of doing a difficult but exciting job in the Ministry of Health's Strategic Planning, Directorate General Education and Training. What I wish to do now is briefly place the paper into its local context and describe where the research is ongoing.

Moving from an East Asian culture to an Arabian culture through an openness of praxis

I wish to be as transparent as possible in this process. By praxis, I mean the integration of theory and practice. I refer you to the exemplars in the earlier video data and the following one from Thailand.

My experiences in Thailand are grounded in my Buddhist values that I was able to live in actual praxis. The video link below presents evidence of my work in a volunteer hospice in the north of Thailand. I led two major research projects with scholars from Khon Kean University, Faculty of Nursing and a team of volunteers. This video presents the evidence of

scientific research practice alongside the skills of touch as we analysed saliva pre and post meditation and prayer plus pre and post holistic touch massage.



Video 3: [My work in Hospice care in Thailand. Living my values.](http://youtu.be/0DRY-55R7HQ?list=UUFMrTom9BdGY2tzT8kfl9TA) (Adler-Collins, 2014c) - <http://youtu.be/0DRY-55R7HQ?list=UUFMrTom9BdGY2tzT8kfl9TA>

The context of this research in this move from East Asian to Arab culture is grounded in what, for me, is a new culture. I quickly identified the conditioning that my British cultural heritage had endowed me with, including the baggage of the stereotyping from my military service. This was crucial as recent political events blew the winds of change throughout the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring. I contend that even as the story at the point of telling is grounded in an Arab context and culture, there are repeating patterns of behaviour and policy that I have identified in other countries in which I have worked. I contend that the stories of Omani nursing offer insights to the lessons learned and unlearned from the failures and success of the past that still influence the present and cast a longreaching influence into the future for visionary developers in education who might not see the full impact on their policies and actions in the short-term changes. I remind myself that those ideas and actions that bring about transformation in social education and working praxis need to be introduced carefully and sustained over time. This work is factual and seeks not to attribute blame or to judge harshly the decisions. Rather I wish to analyse events to clarify, with the 20/20 vision of reflection and hindsight, my own understandings of what are the complex social and cultural issues that will take a long time to understand. If I can ever reach a full understanding is questionable to myself but I do understand education, design and praxis within a nursing context having worked in this setting in several different countries and can identify certain issues that occur in all and yet will be solved from within their own unique cultural matrix of development.

The importance of cultural influences within a nation is starkly in the forefront of Arab politics, with the recent history of the region still influenced by its colonial past. Many Middle East countries are affected by the events of Arab Spring. The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011. However, their purpose, relative success, and outcome remain hotly disputed in Arab countries. Oman has been reaping the benefits of a gifted leader sustaining

a quality of life that is uniquely Omani. The winds of the Arab spring gave rise to young Omanis taking to the streets in active political participation through demonstration and strikes. This caused concern within the elder generation of more conservatively-thinking Omani leaders. The Government had to move quickly to address the demands of its citizens and many of these demands directly influenced increased investment in healthcare and education. The Government could have taken a far harsher line than it did as we have seen this route taken by other countries. However, when speaking of their own culture, Omanis often state that usually Omani culture offers negotiation as a first line in problem solving. Omani culture has a strong feeling of family that extends to working in teams or with associated social groups, and at times, debates can be quite heated and passionate; however leaders do listen and usually a compromise is reached and action plans put forward in which no one party feels fully comfortable but the answer can be lived with honor and respect.

Practically, it also resulted in rapid changes in senior government posts and layers of positions were removed and new younger and more aware political appointees filled the vacuum created. The process called Omanization accelerated with a goal of having at least 70 percent of all top positions filled with qualified Oman scholars, business leaders, and administrators. Health care remains the one major industry that employs the most number of expatriates.¹ The transition continues with mid-line Omani managers and scholars sponsored for a full range of higher degrees in USA, Australia, Europe and Great Britain. Some degrees are specially tailored for Omani needs; others are combinations of research degrees, taught degrees and online degrees. Returning Ph.D. holders are emerging who have a visionary approach to healthcare and education, passionate about moving Oman and Omani citizens forward in a controlled sustainable manner. These returning scholars naturally influenced by their educational experiences that reflect in the higher education philosophy of nursing in Oman. It is my researching of these influences that has caused me concern as I watch the colonisation of Omani scholars by the Western cultures. I have seen this colonization of what is nursing knowledge and values in all the countries that I have worked in which I struggle to decolonize. In the next part, I share the move away from the dependence on the traditional medical model in Oman that gives me hope that Omani scholars will find their own way to where they want to go in their time frame and not any behest of others.

Moving away from dependence on the medical model in Oman

Oman, like many Arab countries, is experiencing ever-increasing health care demands as their government commits to the expansion of Health Promotion to their people. This injection of finances, resources and planning has positively impacted the increased provision of upgraded and modern healthcare facilities throughout the country. Embedded within this expansion is the focus on more and better-prepared healthcare providers. This remains problematic, as healthcare training has to start within the secondary school system with the teaching of basic sciences to academic levels that will reflect the future needs of the service.

¹ (Personal communication Dean Salim, Oman Nursing Institute, 2014.)

As nursing represents a major workforce at the forefront of the health care field, nursing education became a top priority within the Ministry of Health (MOH). It became clear to the strategic planners that financing this investment was only part of the equation. Time remained the other major problem, and time could not make the education level of nursing move any faster to accommodate the planning and allocation of resources. Human Resources were, and remain, at the heart of planning.

In response to this demand to increase the number of local graduates, the MOH were placed in the position similar to other Gulf States of having to recruit expatriate staff from all over the world, as indigenous nurses were not yet available in sufficient numbers. Such a process answers an immediate problem in terms of importing the desired skill sets but also has within it, the seeds of future conflict and tensions as the workforce is a multitude of highly complex social conditioning, cultures and beliefs from many countries. Expatriate staff, like myself, brought with them not only the skills and philosophy of nursing but their culture, traditions and attitudes that vary widely from those of the Omanis which has given rise to cultural conflict between the nurses and the patient on occasions.

The modern change began in 1971, when the Ministry of Health (MOH) took over the responsibility of the management of nursing education from the American Associate Missionaries. The first formal nursing program in Oman was introduced in 1982. A nurse educator from United Kingdom initiated this program. At the time the Department of Nursing at the Institute of Health Sciences developed two types of programs: the Registered Professional Nurse and the Assistant Nurse Program. The Assistant Nurse Program was discontinued in 1988.

Despite these efforts, the MOH annual health statistics (1998) revealed that only 26% of the total 7,453 nurse workforce are Omanis. This situation was also accepted as a necessary but temporary measure while the country made further efforts to educate its own people who would eventually provide quality nursing care to address the health needs of the people of Oman within the context of their Arabic culture and Islamic traditions. Continuous evaluation of nurse training and service delivery was undertaken as part of the continuous improvement of nursing education and prevented the healthcare system of Oman from being burdened by under-qualified nurses. Oman has periodically sought advice from nursing consultants from different external organizations including but not limited to: World Health Organization (WHO), United Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health visitors (UKCC) and Oman American Joint Commission. These different organizations were used to develop a curriculum relevant to the needs of the society, initiated in 1994 by an American Nurse Educator with the help of nursing faculty from Egypt, India, Jordan, Philippines, United Kingdom and Oman.

Nursing education in the Sultanate of Oman continued to evolve through numerous stages to reach its current status of international recognition. This evolution has occurred in terms of the entry requirements for students, the duration of the programs, the location and number of schools of nursing, the training and development of Omani teachers and the structure and content of the curriculum the students study. Part of the vision is a new college of Allied Health offering the first Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) courses in Allied Health. My job has been to act as a consultant educator, planner and acting Dean, when required, to the college that opened for students on September 7, 2014. As I moved into this new

position, I was reminded again of a previous discovery I made during my doctoral studies at the University of Bath about the dangers of colonization and I quote from my thesis the following highly relevant extract:

The paradigm wars are very real. Donmoyer (1996, p. 19) wrote of them: ... 'the fact [is] that ours is a field characterised by paradigm proliferation and, consequently, the sort of field in which there is little consensus about what research and scholarship are and what research reporting and scholarly discourse should look like. The paradigm war within the Western academy is at least explicit.' Here in Japan another kind of conflict is also occurring that is not so explicit and is much harder to detect. As well as the issues raised in the paradigm clashes and conflicts I have witnessed, there is paradigm colonization under way. This, I believe, is a far more serious issue. For example, the importation into Japan of Western concepts of nursing, ethics and research, and the subsequent use of these concepts, shows that there has been a change in the way that the ideas are understood by the Eastern academy, as compared with the Western academy, although the ideas originated in the West. Japan is often cited as importing models and paradigms en bloc; a trend that started with Japan's drive to westernise during the Meiji period of the 19th Century (Wolferen 1990). As a result, at the end of the 1930s, according to Wolferen, Japan was: ... left heirs to a farrago of disjointed, ill-digested bits and pieces of knowledge. (p. 239)

...The problem then, and I would say now, is that the very contextual roots from which the knowledge was grown were not transferable or even fully understood. Hence, the situation for Japanese academics was problematic - on the one hand they sought external forms of knowing in their drive to be Western, but on the other hand did not have the resources to reproduce those same paradigms in Japan because they were considered to be culturally inappropriate. I refer to this situation as flower-arranging education. By this, I am using the metaphor of the flowering of different types of knowledge. When Japanese scholars see the flower they cut it and bring it back to Japan. It is not difficult to see that the flower is appreciated for being a flower, careers are even based on this, but the flower is but the blooming of a process. Without the roots and stem (cultural context) the flower will die. Even if attempts are made to preserve it, soon the inevitable changes in what was originally attractive will occur. (Adler-Collins, 2007, p. 261)

I promised myself that no matter what the future held I would do my best in whatever capacity I could to prevent myself from colonizing the Omani nursing system and be vocal in the warning to my future Omani colleagues. I promised never to destroy my soul with silence. This promise was going to return and cost me dearly, for as I strove to be honest and direct grounded in the knowledge and experience I had, I forgot about the consequences of being very professional and being a straight speaker. Had it not been for support from my Dean, my stay in Oman would have been far shorter than planned. I was too direct in my constructive criticism of existing systems that I had been engaged to critique. I made a cultural mistake, for within Arab culture directness is not appreciated and not acceptable. Diplomacy in communication is essential. I was misled by my military nurse education and the rigour of higher education through which I had passed in the United Kingdom, in that my bluntness was a mistake in this culture. Mentoring by Dean and cultural orientation placed me in good stead for the future challenges that were waiting for me as a living global citizen. I follow now with my response to the challenges of learning from different cultures.

Responding to the challenges with my learning from different cultures

One of my intentions in my role as consultant is to avoid colonizing by creating a neutral safe zone for dialogue in order to effect the changes necessary in the nursing programmes in Oman. I wrote about this concept in my thesis, which still keeps revealing to me greater insights than I ever expected on its completion in 2007. I wish to focus on the following comment I made:

At this time I became greatly focused on space and the boundaries of what made up or defined space. I saw space as being in and part of everything. I took Lewin's theory of tension (1946) and modified it to create a neutral safe zone where both the student in my curriculum and I would be safe to explore the concepts of the curriculum without violating the other in our quest for knowledge. I suggest that Lewin's theory of tension, of A dominating B or B dominating A, can be modified by creating a neutral zone of 'safe communication' where both A and B can examine the issues or facts and take on board what they are able to integrate into their own truth and understanding. (Adler-Collins, 2007, p. 255)

I see the significance of this zone of safe communication in the B.Sc.N accreditation process in Oman that has been in development for several years with the influence of many different Western ways of thinking as well as the very rich courses of Islamic Culture and Omani Healthcare Systems and Communication Skills already being taught in Arabic. Arabic scholars have developed a very flexible approach to the dynamics of evolving the B.Sc. curriculum. This is achieved through working, focus groups, taskforces and the Curriculum Evaluation Committee and is being modified by the results of what works, what does not work, its relevance to Omani culture and the need to produce qualified safe novice nurses (Benner 1984) for the service as a continuous process.

Taking Lewin's (1946) concept as a framework, creating safe spaces where reflection and respect for the learning, desires and knowledge of others, has now officially moved into the MOH training with the appointment of a new Directorate General Nursing and Health Services in 2014. A circle of Educators, open to all, in the model of Whitehead's coffee corner (Whitehead 1989; 2014) has been created where scholars and practitioners bring their thinking and questions to a safe and respectful space to share and peer-review.

I have always been clear and transparent concerning my values that I hope the reader will have identified. I had a tension about being employed in an Islamic setting. I was deeply conscious that my religion might not be understood by some Islamic teachings. I did not feel that it was necessary to explain the many different types of Buddhist beliefs as they might not be understood or accepted. Some compromise on my part was necessary and I understood that I had been recruited for my academic work, not my values as a Buddhist monk. It was, therefore, necessary and prudent to remove my robes and adopt the formal look of an English professor including hair and a beard. This was in no sense a violation of my values for I believed they are lived in my heart and my actions. Wearing my robes would have been confrontational and distracting from the reasons why I was in Oman. Dr Majid and my Dean, Dr Salim, have been supportive and counselled me on how to take care in the sensitive area of religion. I soon understood that I urgently needed to get inside the teachings of the Holy Koran to see if I could help to shape the curriculum through Islamic

teachings rather than western paradigms. Whatever the future held, I understood that I had to live my values quietly and non-publicly and remain constantly mindful that the normal open expression and directness associated with my European way of communication could be problematic and challenging in Omani culture. The concerns mentioned in this text are but a few of the challenges facing Omani leaders, scholars and myself. The curriculum is evolving along with faculty and administration in a dynamic manner that will result in the laying down of a solid foundation on which to build future educational planning. It is my hope that in the near future Omani educators will contribute their stories of their evolution in healthcare and education in their own living-educational-theories to this journal. I conclude with some last thoughts and next steps.

Conclusion and next steps

The Arab Spring caused considerable disquiet in the Gulf States, some of which still reverberate with unexpected shockwaves rumbling under the surface as the youth challenges and expects more. Oman has developed a unique way of holding both strands, the old and the new, in an amazing web of co-existence. Being seen as an agent of change and the external source driving that change makes for an interesting life! On September 7, 2014, the first cohort of Ministry of Health B.Sc. student nurses started their journey, moving towards a new paradigm of nursing education. There is a determination within Oman to meet the challenges as they emerge through praxis. The concerns mentioned in this text are but a few of the challenges facing Omani leaders and scholars.

In my next paper, I will share my work in the development of the curriculum, which is evolving along with faculty, and administration in a dynamic manner that will result in the laying down of a solid foundation on which to build future educational planning. It is my hope that in the near future Omani educators will contribute their stories of their evolution in healthcare and education in their own living-educational-theories to this journal.

In each of the countries in which I have worked, I have endeavored to adapt my practices, my dress, my language and my behaviour to fit into the environment always keeping my values intact but still adapting. I have attempted to keep my passion for education but have felt constricted. I remained in Japan for 12 years and was marginalized. Now in Oman, I may feel silenced in a different way but I am appreciated. Being a living global citizen makes for an interesting and challenging life!

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