

Review of Jane Spiro’s doctoral thesis “How I have arrived at a notion of knowledge transformation, through understanding the story of myself as creative writer, creative educator, creative manager, and educational researcher.”

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I found in this thesis an original form of narrative inquiry as a living-theory, as distinct from many living-theories that focus on action research cycles and Jane’s capacity as a creative writer brings an engaging form to the writing and research.

Jane begins her abstract by clarifying her intention in creating her thesis:

My aim in this thesis is to tell the story/stories of how I arrived at a living theory of creativity which I shall call 'knowledge transformation'.

As she brings her experience and stories as creative writer (in and outside of the Academy), educator, team leader and researcher together she explores the strategies and issues raised. Jane sets out the premise that 'knowledge-transformation' involves the capacity to challenge self and other and is central to her thinking about creativity. She considers how far this capacity can be transferable, teachable and measurable in educational contexts arriving at a notion of 'scaffolded creativity'. In her examination of learning about learning, she defines knowledge-transformation as deep learning that can lead to positive change of both the learner and what is learned. I could identify with her 5-year process of writing her thesis as her job changes, she faces the risk of redundancy notes, files become spread over various locations, and knowing that writing her thesis:

... has only been sustainable, because the process has run alongside my roles as educator/writer/manager. Change in one sphere has become change in the other. This has given the research process authenticity and impetus. As I recognised the validity of the 'poetic leap of self' into this research, it became possible to work towards more honest and more focused reflection, directly honed and tested within my everyday work and practice. (p. 297)

Jane's thesis is very accessible as shows how she writes herself out and brings to the foreground what the reader needs in order to follow her learning in the research. Many Living Theory researchers have used action research as they generate their living-theory. Part of Jane's originality as a creative writer is to show how she has generated her explanation of educational influence through 'story' as a methodology as she connects both her stories as creative writer and action researcher. Jane's answers to her questions show how a creative writer can go beyond the limits of any existing methodology in generating a unique living-theory.



Video 1: Video of Jane Spiro introducing her thesis (<http://youtu.be/wQshsvCzBkk>)

References

- Spiro, J. (2008). How I have arrived at a notion of knowledge transformation, through understanding the story of myself as creative writer, creative educator, creative manager, and educational researcher. (Doctoral thesis, University of Bath, UK). Retrieved May 13, 2015, from <http://actionresearch.net/living/janespirophd.shtml>