

## **Editorial Foreword**

Swaroop Rawal

### **Swaroop Rawal**

*Freelance Educational  
Consultant, India*

*Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings.  
Not all things are blest, but the  
seeds of all things are blest.  
The blessing is in the seed.*

*This moment, this seed, this wave of the sea, this look, this  
instant of love.  
Years over wars and an imagining of peace. Or the expiation  
journey  
toward peace which is many wishes flaming together,  
fierce pure life, the many-living home.  
Love that gives us ourselves, in the world known to all  
new techniques for the healing of the wound,  
and the unknown world. One life, or the faring stars.  
(Muriel Rukeyser)*

I begin this foreword by quoting the last two verses from Rukeyser's poem, *An Elegy in Joy*, as it resonates with what I have to say. In the poem the poet counsels: 'Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings./Not all things are blest, but the/seeds of all things are blest./The blessing is in the seed.' This takes me to the editorial board's obligation: we are charged with nurturing beginnings so that we may carry our blessings forward. And it is now that we have to do it: 'This moment, this seed... this look, this instant of love'.

Rukeyser goes on to say: 'Love that gives us ourselves, in the world known to all/new techniques for the healing of the wound,/and the unknown world. One life, or the faring stars'. There is a world known to us and then there are unknown worlds and they are alongside and also a part of one another. Love that gives us who we are is of both. 'One life, or the faring stars': we may look in one direction and then look in the other; look at our life, then look at the travelling stars. The sweep of our vision is the

Copyright: © 2016 Rawal.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

connection between them. It is these connections, joy, nurturing, new techniques and imaging of peace, that the articles in this issue deal with in the written works and in the process of writing the works. In this collection of articles, the authors offer a feeling of hope, and position individual agency and collective actions with a vision of creating a better future.

In 2008, when our founding editors started EJOLTS:

[they] had a vision of creating space for stories about the emancipation of people, an equality of power and truth and value, a democratisation of learning processes, about a joy in living and being involved in the lives of ourselves and others, trying to improve something, trying to make the world - however small a part of it - a better place. [They] wanted to celebrate excellent practice, life-affirming pleasure in achievements which make a difference for the better for others and ourselves. [They] wanted to celebrate love and hope and truth.' (M. Laidlaw, personal communication, May 23, 2016)

This issue is about all that and more. I say 'more' because of the thought-provoking and democratic way the articles were encouraged to be written. Seeing that the development of an article is a process of becoming, the articles that are featured in this issue evolved over a period of time. For example, Jennings' article, *Ethical Incidents: Experiential Learning in an Introductory Christian Ethics Course*, was first submitted in 2014 (<http://ejolts.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=133>).

The authors were supported to enable them to communicate their stories unambiguously and evocatively. My attention turns now to Parekh's article: *A journey in learning: my reflective account*, the creation and development of which followed a democratic process, and it, too, evolved over a period of time. When the Editorial Board first read her article (like some of the others) it meet the criteria for review, due to her inexperience in writing academic articles; yet her work gave us a sense of hope. We believed that with nourishing and nurturing Parekh would unquestionably be able to tell a persuasive story. She and the other authors were supported by the editorial board-members, as you can see when you log on to the site at [ejolts.org](http://ejolts.org) and read the trail of communication in the 'Submitted Articles' section (<http://ejolts.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=175>).

However, continuing my deliberation on Parekh's article, her text was seen as a potential paper and she was asked to put it in the Community Space. She teaches in rural India where there is a dearth of academic literature, and in addition to that English is her third language. Moira held Parekh's hand throughout the process and helped her develop and restructure the article until it was ready for submission (<http://ejolts.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=178>). Moira became, 'a friend of [Parekh's] mind' (Greene, 1995) and with great clarity and inspired guidance gave back to her a sense of lucidity. She helped the author join parts of her thoughts together in sequence to create a whole. After this, her reviewer encouraged her to reflect on her work to make 'the whole' a clear and more particular one. Throughout the process, all the editors allowed Parekh to maintain an individual agency and allowed her to be in charge of her paper and her learning.

What are the thoughts that come to mind when you read about a process like this? What are the values reflected in the process that was followed here? Why go through all this trouble for one article? When Parekh talked to me after her paper was accepted she said:

The process of writing this article has been incredible learning for me I learnt about many things including the discipline of a research inquiry something I barely knew when I started. It has been a long time since I learned like this, and now have the desire to continue being a challenger and continue strongly on the path my values take me on...' (N. Parekh, personal communication, May 27, 2016).

Democracy, dialogue, hope, love, empathy, equality and equity are values that come to mind when you hear stories such as these. These values inform the creation of this issue. The editors believe, 'people trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must be able to imagine something coming of their hope' (Greene, 1995, p. 25). They must not be silenced. Instead they must be provoked to question their work so their storytelling can be more informed. There must be dialogues in a world, which is being threatened by monologues. Principle values must be affirmed and reaffirmed. Democracy cannot be achieved by statutes; it can only be realized by offering space to people to see their lives and stories as alternative possibilities reaching towards a common world we argue for so relentlessly.

But coming back to the point: why all this trouble for an article? Is EJOLTS merely a platform to encourage others to tell their stories? To urge others to speak? No, it is much more than that. It is about enlarging the public space. It is about emancipation. But most importantly it is about our living-educational-theory, about my Living Theory. It is about values that give meaning to my life and living my life in harmony with my values. I have a unique set of values that give meaning to my existence but there are times when I experience myself as a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989), when I am wavering between the values of 'being strongly academic' and wanting to enable the ones who have had an unequal education express their narrative. There are times when I desire to help the marginalised teachers, yet I am unable to raise the teachers' capacity to do research and engage in quality-theorizing: I am acting in contradiction to my values. It is a denial of my educational and epistemological values. The care, nurturing and efforts that went on behind each article are synchronised with our/my living theory. It is about a pledge made to enable real people with real identities to tell their stories, and to enable them to develop their capacity for research and the generation of theory. These actions are in relation to the promise made, 'to spread the educational influence and academic legitimization of living-educational-theories and a living-theory-methodology, [and] to find appropriate ways of representing the flows of life-affirming energy with values as explanatory principles in narratives of educational influences in learning' ( McNiff, p. 112). It is about 'wishes flaming together' (Rukeyser, 2013): the act of coming together to provide ways to heal the world.

In this issue, like the ones before it, we open spaces where people could come together, speak and act upon values they believe in. The stories are from various cultures and places, like India, Ghana, and the U.K.. Their stories comprise their descriptions and explanations of their practice, while creating their own living-educational-theories of practice (Whitehead, 1989). Their stories enable them to exercise their educational influence in the public sphere. Keeping this in mind, the two articles from India have the Gujarati (an Indian language) translations of the paper alongside them.

1. Rushita Ukani and Swaroop Rawal - A dream for equal education: Reflections on creating a living educational theory (plus the translation), is a paper written in collaboration by a

student-teacher, Ukani, and a teacher-mentor, Rawal. It is an unusual paper, as it is, in fact, written by one author, Ukani, and me as the second author, acting as interpreter. This paper was written with the view to encouraging my student-teachers' entry into 'the knowledge-creating culture' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006), and it tries to answer the question, 'How was I to facilitate my student's entry into 'the knowledge-creating culture?' I believe if we seek progress in Higher Education we must find ways to make academic writing and reading more accessible to students, who are intellectually skilled, but have had inadequate exposure to academic literature. Using the patchwork-text method, we share the narrative of Ukani's living, teaching and learning, with our focus not on the text but on the interrogation and transformation of the lived life of a teacher.

2. Neema Parekh - *A journey in learning: my reflective account (plus the translation)*. In her quest for learning, Parekh shows us that education is growth; it is an ongoing process of reflecting and reconstructing our experience, and such unobstructed development can lead to limitless possibilities. Parekh's story tells us how she improved her situation by improving her learning, revealing her growth from novice to proficiency. Her use of photographs and videos opens up a fascinating opportunity for us to glimpse her classroom and understand her experiences.
3. Brian Jennings - *Ethical Incidents: Experiential Learning in an Introductory Christian Ethics Course deals with the author's efforts to enable a process that supports deeper understanding, discovery, or transformative change with reference to moral values and Christian Ethics*. Through the critical incident approach he uses experiential learning to facilitate his introductory Christian Ethics course. With the interesting use of Critical Incident Assignment and his influences he explains how his students form their living-theories. The astute use of videos enables us to perceive the interview-process with the participant as the author brings out issues that are meaningful to the interviewee, such as marriage, divorce, and Christian Ethics. Sensitive and emotional details that may possibly be lost in the text come into focus in the videos.
4. Richard Vytņiorgu – *I am a Theorist: Learning to Name My World with a New Literary Humanism*. Vytņiorgu, an author-learner, grapples with the educational influence he has on others according to what he chooses to write about and how he writes it. In this paper, he explores how his theoretical research in the field of literary humanism has helped him to name himself and his world.
5. Eleanor Lohr – *Teaching with love: how may I continue to improve my practice as I get older?* Lohr suggests that teaching with integrity means practising and developing one's own practice so that this continued learning is transferred to the class. Following a concept of unending learning, she suggests Iyengar yoga teachers must attend to their ongoing professional development. Consequently, there is an ongoing process of both attending class as a student and being a teacher. She expresses her views of teaching as love-informed teaching practice that seeks to nurture development. Lohr asks the question about how love and presence can be brought into action. By continuing to develop her living-theory-methodology she has explained what really matters to her, and how small shifts in perception are capable of generating educational knowledge, not only for her but also for others.

Besides these articles this issue also has book reviews:

- Moira Laidlaw – *Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed: drawing parallels between Freire’s work and EJOLTS’ processes and values*, New York: Continuum, 2005.
- Judith McBride - *Life Writing and Literary Métissage as an Ethos for Our Times*. E. Hasebe-Ludt, C. M. Chambers, & C. Leggo (2009), New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009.
- Pip Bruce Ferguson - *A participatory paradigm for an engaged scholarship in higher education: Action leadership from a South African perspective*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015.
- Jack Whitehead - *Academic Autoethnography: Inside Teaching in Higher Education*, D. Pillay, I. Naicker & K. Pithouse-Morgan (Eds.). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016.

In this issue we also present two Living Theory theses and dissertations:

- Swaroop Rawal’s (2006) - *The Role Of Drama In Enhancing Life Skills In Children With Specific Learning Difficulties In A Mumbai School: My Reflective Account*. Review by Jack Whitehead.
- Eleanor Lohr’s (2006) *Love At Work: What Is My Lived Experience Of Love, And How May I Become An Instrument Of Love’s Purpose?* Review by Jackie Delong.

In a bid to affect the world through their energies, building on the foundation for the future, the authors have presented sophisticated accounts and I am delighted to present them in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading the articles as much as the authors and editors enjoyed working on them.

## References:

- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. Jossey-Bass Education Series: Wiley.
- McNiff, J. (2007). Chapter 12. My Story is My Living Educational Theory. In Clandinin, J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 308-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Rukeyser, M. (2013). *Elegy in Joy*. In *Elegies: Poetry by Muriel Rukeyser*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation. Accessed June 3, 2016, from <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/elegy-joy-excerpt>
- Scardamalia, M. & Bereiter, C. (2006). Knowledge building: Theory, pedagogy and technology. In Sawyer, K. (Ed.). *Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (pp. 97-118). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitehead, J. (1989) ‘Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve my practice?’, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1):41-52.