



Editorial Foreword

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This second issue of the 10th Anniversary of EJOLTS continues to illustrate the spread of Living Theory research as a global movement with contributions from researchers in India, South Africa and the UK. The papers in this issue also illustrate the pertinence of Living Theory research for educational practitioners working in diverse fields of practice, such as: Jason Hocknell-Nickels working as a systemic coach serving an Information Technology directorate within a UK Government agency; Moira Laidlaw working as a tutor of an Open University Development Management M.Sc.; Swaroop Rawal drafting the life-skills educational policy for the Indian Ministry of Human Resource and Development; and Jack Whitehead, the originator of Living Theory research, engaged in higher educational research to extend understandings Living Theory research in complex relationships and transnational communities intending to contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

The first paper by Jason Hocknell-Nickels, *'Learning to Feel the Presence of Kairos: My Living-Theory Account'*, is focused on his professional practice as a systemic coach serving an Information Technology directorate within a United Kingdom Government agency. In his explanation of the meaning of Kairos in the context of its use, Hocknell-Nickels distinguishes between two words used by the Greeks for time, Chronos and Kairos. Chronos is the idea of time as a planning and measuring device whilst Kairos is the idea for the 'right' or most-opportune moment. Hocknell-Nickels explains that each Kairos moment comes by once. He advocates noticing it and acting without hesitation as you feel its presence, close to your intuition.

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Hocknell-Nickels' account of his on-going learning and professional practice as a Living-Theorist systemic coach, includes his principles as a systemic coach:

- i) Having a paradoxical non-attachment to any specific outcome.
- ii) Being loyal to the whole system.
- iii) Balancing challenge and support in the process of what is emergent.

He clarifies and communicates the meaning of his embodied value of loving kindness, through its emergence in practice by creating the 'right' environment or 'safe container'. Hocknell-Nickels claims that from this space, people that he cares about can more easily enter dialogue, co-inquiry and co-learning. The context for the analysis in this paper is focused on a workshop referred to as *The Whole System Event*.

Hocknell-Nickels clearly communicates the meanings of his values in action, drawing on different data sources and a concern to ensure that the paper is authentic. He shares his learning as a process-in-action through clearly organised cycles of inquiry with increasingly deeper reflections. This helped me to understand what had been learned as well as how this new knowledge was generated. I believe that this process-in-action together with increasingly deeper reflections will have important implications for others who are also seeking to create educationally productive spaces with colleagues.

Hocknell-Nickels is concerned to live authentically in all aspects of his life including his professional practice and research. By sharing his evidence-based explanation of what being a Living Theory systemic coach means in his coaching capacity, Hocknell-Nickels invites us to suggest ways in which he can strengthen the comprehensibility, evidence, normative understandings and authenticity of his explanations. Through this approach to validation, readers can also help to evaluate his claim that writing in this way helps to strengthen and resources him to meet the challenges of his role. As readers we can help him to evaluate his claim that, 'It helps me to make sense of my experiences' and that, 'By writing in this way I open-up my learning to critical reflection with the hope that this will, in turn, create space for life-affirming dialogical relationships (Isaacs, 1999)'.

The second paper is by Moira Laidlaw, *Living Hope and Creativity as Educational Standards of Judgement*, who is currently engaged as a tutor of an Open University module for the Development Management M.Sc. She describes and explains an educational transition between the writing of educational stories over nearly 40 years as an educator and practitioner-researcher. Laidlaw shows that the educational transition from her initial idea of the use of her values as living standards of judgment in Living Theory research to the use of relationally dynamic values as living standards of judgment is of epistemological significance.

Laidlaw offers two stories about her classroom-practice in the 1980s to illustrate her meanings of her values of 'creativity' and 'hope' as she perceives them now. She makes an original contribution to educational knowledge and theory by:

- i) explaining the development of her understanding of the educational processes involved in making links between 'hope' and 'creativity'.
- ii) clarifying the relationally dynamic meanings of hope and creativity as living educational standards of judgment and explanatory principles.

Laidlaw shows how she uses her understanding of hope and creativity in her present educational practices with two Master's students. Laidlaw clarifies further her understanding of the relational dynamic between her values as she continues to clarify and communicate their meanings as explanatory principles and living educational standards of judgment.

Laidlaw also shows how adults who are studying for Masters' Degrees can engage in a co-creative way with a supervisor, as the supervisor researches her own educational practices and educational influences without a differential in power-relations acting in a coercive way in the educational relationships. This paper may have an important message for University Ethics and Research Committees who are faced with Living Theory research proposals. Sometimes Living Theory researchers have been faced with inappropriate demands such as 'Remove the personal pronoun from your title' and questions such as, 'How are you going to guarantee that the subjects of your experiment can be returned to their original state?' Removing the 'I' from an educational self-study practitioner-researcher's account is obviously inappropriate as the 'I' is a necessary part of the educational enquiry focussed on questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. The idea of returning 'subjects' to an original state in an educational enquiry is both farcical and incomprehensible, as an educational enquiry requires a change in a 'subject', without change there can be no claim for learning to have taken place or for anyone to have had an educational influence in the learning of anyone. At the same time I accept there is a responsibility for educational practitioners to be aware of unintended consequences of trying to have an educational influence in the learning of others, well captured for me in Sartre's phrase, 'condemned to freedom'.

Swaroop Rawal, in her paper, *An Interface: How do I Overcome Challenges to Justify and Communicate Claims to my Educational Knowledge and the Educational Influence of my Practice?* shows how a living-educational-theory of professional practice can be constructed from a practitioner's enquiry of the kind: How do I live my values in practice? The paper addresses all three components of a living-educational-theory in explaining an individual's educational influence in her own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding. Many living-educational-theories, are strong on evidence of educational influences in one's own learning and the learning of others, but rather less strong on evidence of influence in the learning of social formation. Rawal provides evidence of her success as she tried to influence the life-skills educational policy of the Indian Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

Through a systematic recreation of events, her actions and reflections on her experience, Rawal explains her personal transformation, as she becomes a more socially responsible thinker. This has implications for Living Theory researchers seeking to enhance the educational influence of Living Theory research as a social movement. In becoming a more socially responsible thinker Rawal describes how she was a part of a group comprising people who had participated in the life-skills education *Chintan Shivir* (workshop). After the workshop the Government involved the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Rawal explains that she experienced conflict in the interface and describes how she dealt with the conflict, which was focused on the values and work ethic of faculty members and differing understandings of curriculum and teaching and research experience.

As Rawal asserts her academic freedom and right to question the academic competence of the 'system', she asks and answers:

- How well did I deal with conflict situations?
- How persistent was I in maintaining my goal and vision?
- Could I adjust and adapt my action plan?

Rawal confronted the 'system' and tried to create change as part of her learning and transformation. Given her account we can evaluate the validity of her claim that, 'Reassessing my assumptions and challenging them enabled me to transform my understanding and act on my renewed perspectives and become a more socially responsible thinker' and in the process extend our own learning.

Rawal's success at having an educational influence in the learning of one of the social formations she lives and works in is evidenced by the statements in the award ceremony of Honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Worcester on the 6th November 2018:

Dr Swaroop Sampat-Rawal,

Former Miss India and Bollywood superstar, Dr. Swaroop Sampat-Rawal, is an alumna of the University of Worcester, who travels across India training teachers, while also campaigning to get ore children, such as those in tribal communities or street children, into the classroom. Dr. Sampat-Rawal studied for a Ph.D. in Education at Worcester, graduating in 2006, and since dedicated herself to community development and advocacy within the field of education. She aims to help children overcome adversity and become resilient. She is a member of the Governing Council for Save the Children, whose mission is to create lasting change in the lives of disadvantaged children in India. Rawal developed a training curriculum for Jeevan Kaushalya, an adolescent girls project in Gujarat, which was a drama-based life skills intervention implemented across 3,450 villages in six districts reaching out to 38,000 young members of the village-level adolescent girls' network. The 13 minute video that includes both the introduction to Swaroop Rawal and her response can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7GpmNK5OhU>.

Ten years ago, in the first issue, EJOLTS published Whitehead's paper, *Using a living theory methodology in improving practice and generating educational knowledge in living theories* (Whitehead, 2008). In this 2018 paper, *How am I improving my contribution to Living Theory research as a global social movement? An Emancipatory Dialogue Between Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology in Living Theory Higher Educational Research* he shows how his research has moved on. This enquiry includes an emancipatory dialogue between epistemology, ontology and axiology in Living Theory higher educational research. Whitehead includes insights from his earlier positivist and dialectical perspectives and his present development of relationally-dynamic educational epistemology, ontology and axiology focussing on his value of emancipation.

In his first paper Whitehead clarified his original idea that individuals can generate their living-educational-theories as explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings. In this 2018 paper he goes further by clarifying and communicating the meanings of embodied ontological values in the course of their emergence in practice and uses these values as explanatory principles in explanations of

educational influence in learning. Digital visual data, with empathetic resonance and empathetic validity, are used to clarify and communicate the meanings of his embodied ontological values in educational relationships and in explanations of educational influence. He also includes a visual narrative to communicate a form of Living Theory research that is grounded within community relationships of Living Theory researchers who are contributing to a global social movement.

Whitehead explains that ideas for this paper have been drawn from *Emancipation and Epistemicide: Two approaches to professing higher educational research*, a paper he presented at the conference of the European Association of Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) on *Dialogue between ontology and epistemology: New perspectives on theory and methodology in research on learning and education*, 27 August 2018, Homerton College, Cambridge. Retrieved 12 October 2018 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwcambbridge250818.pdf>

The reviews of Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence. Why it can matter more than IQ.* and Steiner, C. (1997). *Achieving Emotional Literacy: A Personal Program to Increase Your Emotional Intelligence* by Jerome Thamsanga Gumede, a Black South African (Zulu) educator, brings the knowledge from the European social sciences, developed in the 1990's on emotional literacy, into the present global discourse. This issue is completed by Jack Whitehead's review of Eger, E. (2017). *The Choice: Even in hell hope can flower.* In bringing Edith Eger's writing into EJOLTs he brings into this transcultural space, learning imbued with life-enhancing values of resilience, hope and courage. These emerged from the author's appalling personal experiences of the holocaust and of racism in pre- and post-war Europe and America. It leaves me with a hope that we might each contribute to the flourishing of humanity: yours, mine and ours. One way of doing that is by continuing to make accounts of our living-educational-theory public.