

Moira Laidlaw's Personal Reflections on EJOLTS

As a part of the celebration of the first ten years of EJOLTS, this writing is a personal marker in my 40-year educational journey. I embraced teaching as a vocation in 1977, and for the first ten years as a school-teacher, I didn't formally account to myself or others what I was doing, but it *felt* right to be working with people in ways that generated hope and a sense of purpose in individuals and groups.

The powerful dialectic between my own educational journey and those of others became integrated more formally as I incorporated the processes of individually-oriented Action Research (Whitehead, 1985), and later Living Theory (Whitehead, 1989) into my practice and theorising. With the completion of my living-theory Ph.D. (Laidlaw, 1996) I was in a more informed position about the significance of taking responsibility for my own learning, as I pursued improvements in working with others within the social contexts I encountered (China from 2001–2007; in the UK with the Open University from 2009 to the present).

There was, however, a further step to be taken. The inauguration of an international, refereed journal for living-theories seemed a natural outcome for people concerning themselves with ways of improving their educational practices and with generating and sharing their educational knowledge in social contexts as they celebrated the hope for the future of humanity (EJOLTS, 2017 at <http://ejolts.net/>). Publishing living-theories would enable individuals and the growing community to learn from each other through the practice, writing, theorising, reviewing and management of the processes we were undergoing.

Throughout my time with EJOLTS I have contributed papers, and worked on the editorial team and as a reviewer in our open reviewing system (see <http://ejolts.org/>) and I have learnt about the educational value of the democratisation of learning processes for writers, reviewers, editors and groups (Laidlaw, 2017). I have also seen Arianna Briganti (Ph.D. student) flourishing both as a Living Theorist and as a writer for EJOLTS (Briganti, 2015), in which she emphasises a growing merger between ongoing enquiries and Living Theory as a social movement.

My own EJOLTS articles (Laidlaw, 2008, 2012, 2015) have enabled me to plot the course of my progress following my six years in China. I began with an explanation of my educational development since 1978. In 2012 I was supported through EJOLTS in difficult times as I tried to come to terms with very painful changes in my life. In the third article (Laidlaw, 2015) I was then in a position to explain the significance to my work of the social and political contexts of my educational development through what I was doing formally at the Open University and locally more informally. Finally I co-wrote an article with a friend and colleague, Ben Cunningham (Cunningham & Laidlaw, 2017), as we sought to improve our practice by coming to terms with our own living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989).

EJOLTS has been a source of support, inspiration and encouragement throughout the last ten years and this is something I want to celebrate. We have been discussing the importance of forming good-quality questions as the root of enquiries, in order to enable practices that live out one's core values. And this is where I wish to end these brief reflections. My question is:

How can I continue to support EJOLTS as I create my own living-educational-theory?

References

- Briganti, A. (2015). Generating my own living-theory: an interim report, *8*(2), 76-99.
- Cunningham B. & Laidlaw, M. How can we live out our values more fully in our practice by an explicit explorations of our living contradictions? *10*(1), 1-25.
- Laidlaw, M. (2015). How I am trying to lead the best possible life: towards a more helpful framing of my practice, *8*(2), 35-75.
- Laidlaw, M. (2012). Overcoming Culture Shocks: learning to do things differently, *5*(2), 44-98.
- Laidlaw, M. (2008). In Pursuit of Counterpoint: an educational journey, *1*(1), pp. 69-102.
- Laidlaw, M. (1996). How can I create my own living educational theory as I account for my own educational development? (Ph.D. thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved 13 May, 2017, from <http://www.actionresearch.net/moira.shtml>
- 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.
- Whitehead, J. (1985) *An analysis of an individual's educational development - the basis for personally orientated action research*, in Shipman, M. (Ed.) *Educational Research: Principles, Policies and Practice*, pp. 97-108, London: Falmer.