

The EJOLTS 10th Anniversary Review

My Personal Context – motivation, development and evolution

Preamble

I am writing here in the first person. I am addressing you, the reader, through the first person singular part of speech 'I'. As a natural response to this form of address, you might be asking who 'I' is and so I am now hearing you ask the question, *Who are you?* For me, this question is essentially ontological and so I cannot respond with labels such as 'male' or 'socialist' or descriptions about my functions such as 'educator' or 'father' or 'researcher'. I answer the question 'Who are you?' by saying that I am a person who holds certain values relating to freedom, justice and democracy that are generally regarded as offering hope for the flourishing of humanity and which I try, often imperfectly, to live out in the form of my life. A thumbnail autobiography that offers some initial context to these statements is available via <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/pmejolts16/Autobiography.pdf> 'An archeology of my values' may be read on pages 41–44 via <http://ejolts.net/files/286.pdf>

Educational research

Formal schooling is an activity that seeks improvement and whose form derives from societal values. Educational research seeks to improve education, which itself seeks improvement that offers hope for the flourishing of humanity. The phrase, 'offers hope for the flourishing of humanity' is important, in that it emphasises values of freedom over bondage, democracy over totalitarianism, and justice over tyranny – which is where I come to the major motivation for my efforts within educational research. Wherever the term 'values' occurs in my writing, I am speaking about how I am motivated by my personal values to improve what I am doing and to help improve what others within my sphere of influence/care are doing here and now, as an expression of my living-theory. I am also assuming that these are the sorts of values that underpin all forms of educational research, as a global activity that aims to offer hope for the flourishing of humanity.

The proposed EJOLTS review

In the context of the EJOLTS 10th anniversary review, I am asking the question, *What has EJOLTS achieved in the past ten years and what might it achieve over the coming ten years?* I am also asking – of both Living Theory research and of mainstream educational research – the allied question, *What is the educational influence of educational research?* and, incidentally, *What use has all this effort been?*

If we are to review the past ten years of the EJOLTS process and the Living Theory research papers that resulted, possibly against the parallel thread of 'mainstream' educational research, I am led to ask a question that subsumes all the previous ones, namely, *What is educational research?* However, questions of the 'What is ... ?' form invite the construction of large cyclical definitions organised in a system of interlinked categories. In an attempt to avoid building such a tautologous structure, I prefer to enquire into the processes implicit in a question and recast this enquiry as, *What is it to ask what this thing, educational research, is?* – with the main standard of judgment being the extent to which the unit of appraisal under scrutiny offers hope for the flourishing of humanity.

I am a living-theory educational researcher; I offer values-based accounts of my educational influence on myself, on others and on social formations. My living-theory accounts make claims that I understand my own educational development. Undertaking a review of the past ten years of EJOLTS publications will hope to describe and explain the development and evolution of Living Theory over time and of the processes of review and revision by which individuals' living-theory accounts come to be published. Thus, the process of review itself will be a values-based living-theory research activity. With a remit across both Living Theory research and mainstream research, I invite you to engage with me in the process of enquiring:

What is it to ask what this thing, educational research, is?

Peter Mellett
6th September 2017

Our EJOLTS review

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